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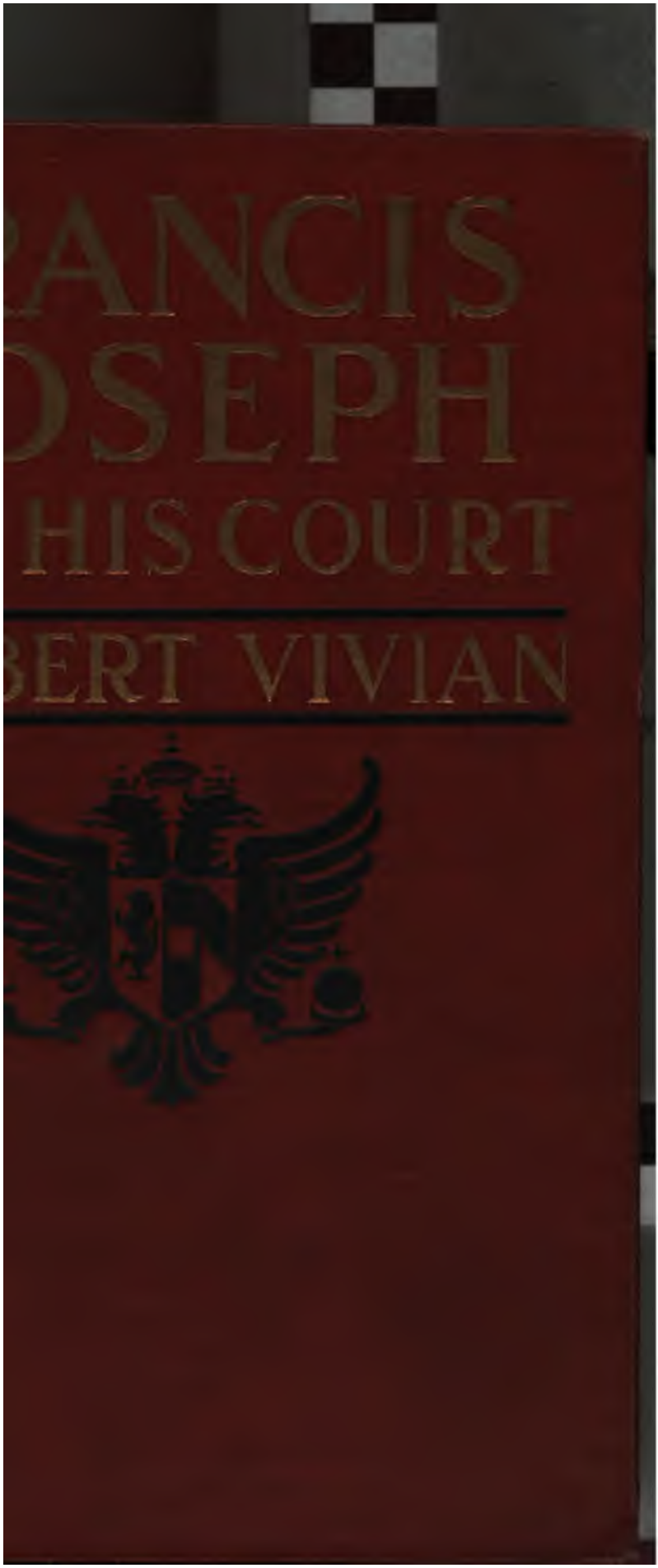
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FRANCIS JOSEPH AND HIS COURT







Photograph, Paul Thompson.

THE LATE FRANCIS JOSEPH

FRANCIS JOSEPH
AND HIS COURT

FROM THE MEMOIRS OF

COUNT ROGER DE RESSÉGUIER

(Son of Francis Joseph's Court Chamberlain)

BY

HERBERT VIVIAN, M.A.

KNIGHT OF THE ROYAL SERVIAN ORDER OF TOKOVO
OFFICIER OF THE ROYAL MONTENEGRIN ORDER OF DANILO
AND AUTHOR OF
"SERVIA, THE POOR MAN'S PARADISE,"
"THE SERVIAN TRAGEDY, ETC."

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NEW YORK
JOHN LANE COMPANY
MCMXVII



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FRANCIS JOSEPH AND HIS COURT



FRANCIS JOSEPH AND HIS COURT

CHAPTER I

MEMORIES

Let me muster my memories.

How far away they seem!

I see a castle, the Castle of Nisko. Nisko lords and noble ladies are all gathered together in a spacious room, talking in hushed tones of the scandalous loves of an Archduke. Mystery. Tragedy. Hush, how terrible! I am quite a child, but I listen to the whispers, though I am more concerned with the fact that the endless plains outside are deep in snow.

Then at Vienna, I am walking with my mother through avenues of limes, all very sweet after a shower. A tall, beautiful (well, rather beautiful) princess takes me on her knee. Her eyes are strange and sad.

"Who is it, mamma?"

"Stéphanie, the wife of the Emperor's heir."

Later on my mother tells me more. She tells stories about nobles, fit only for nobles' ears, stories that the vulgar must not know. I can still hear her voice. My mind is still full of those days, of our palace at Vienna, of the famous guests who came there, of the old Austrian and German castles, where we were entertained.

More recent times. My family has been scattered, but I still meet old acquaintances in various parts of Europe, venerable ladies, retired officials, and they always have something to relate. Even the newspapers now chatter in undertones. But only those who know can reconstruct the whole drama, the whole comedy. There are certain subtle fibres linking facts across the years, and they can only be known to those who have passed their lives in this atmosphere. They link remoter history with recent times.

Maybe you know part of my narrative already, but you know it with too many gaps, with a savour of mystery; all too complicated or too simple.

The connecting thread travels from mouth to mouth in the noble, ancient palaces of Austria and

Germany. It can never issue from that closed circle. Do you remember the steel castle of the Enchanter Merlin on an inaccessible peak of the Pyrenees? Such is the German aristocracy round about the Emperor and his family, locking up in itself the stories which must be withheld from the vulgar. Up above it is the old Emperor planing on his two-headed eagle like Merlin on the hippogriff.

But what if we try to find the end of this thread?

Here it is: Francis Joseph. Many sad and comic events have already woven themselves into his almost septuagenarian reign, and all of them issue from himself, depend on him, bear his imprint. He is the thread.

Let me begin with Maximilian.

A boyhood that dreamed impossible dreams; the ambition of a throne that cost his life; the pity of all pious hearts; then the cold silence of a Vienna church: these are known about Maximilian. But the histories relate more: for instance, that it was the Emperor of the French who offered him the crown of Mexico and then left him in the hands of the rebels; that, less than two months after his death, the Emperors and Empresses of Austria and

France met at Salzburg in friendly conclave, banqueting and feasting for five days in utter disregard of mourning. Beyond this the histories are silent.

And facts tell a very different tale. The Mexican tragedy revealed a hero worthy of other days, and with him an inexperienced politician,—Maximilian, to wit, and Napoleon III., while it left in shadow the real authors of the betrayal,—of the foul deed which the public has not yet discovered, which has long been known in Austria only to the many who dare not tell.

The unfortunate Maximilian was betrayed by his brother Francis Joseph and by Francis Joseph's partisans.

I should not make such a statement if I were not possessed of proofs which fill all my youthful memories. My mother, Countess Erminia of Strachwitz, was lady in waiting at that time. She received a personal invitation from Maximilian and Carlotta, then starting for Mexico, to take over the supreme charge of the Court of the new Empire as *Obersthofmeisterin.* Though she refused, she was associated with many of the events which I am now about to relate. My father, Count Hadrian de Rességuier, one of the Emperor's chamberlains,

owned the great estate and castle of Nisko between the Tatra mountains and the San; among his guests there were Father Fischer, archbishop of Mexico, and Prince Iturbide of the Incas, Maximilian's adopted son. But it was my uncle, Count Oliver de Rességuier, now first chamberlain of Galicia, who acted as Francis Joseph's chief instrument in this black business. At one time my family could talk of nothing else.

There have been many misfortunes in the private life of the old Emperor. But the origin of them all is to be found in the grave fault of his youth: his hatred of his brother Maximilian.

It may have been in 1846. The Archduchess Sophia, mother of Maximilian and Francis Joseph, the future Emperor, was receiving in one of the great saloons of the Hofburg. The Empress Mary Caroline was there. My mother, then fifteen years of age, sat among the maids of honour by virtue of her rank as the daughter of a high functionary of the Empire. She often recalled the gold and the mirrors, the soft light stealing through the high curtained windows upon the lace kerchiefs of the young ladies, upon tall fair head-dresses and crinolines. They chattered, they worked embroideries

for charity (even in those distant days), and my mother was clever with her needle. Then, no one knew why, in the presence of their imperial aunt and their mother and all those gentle children who had gathered together for good works, the two young Archdukes, Francis Joseph and Maximilian, came to blows. They were sixteen and fourteen years old, fine, tall boys with fair hair. The younger, Maximilian, proved the stronger. Francis Joseph's mouth and nose were bleeding when the pair were separated from their unbrotherly embrace. It was a humiliation to be remembered later on.

This scene, as the high society of Vienna knows, led to many others, each more violent than the last. For Maximilian's mother took his part, he openly confessed liberal ideas, he acquired a certain popularity in Italy and Hungary: in fact, he was becoming a danger. Meanwhile, on the 2nd of December, 1848, the other had become Emperor.

Maximilian had a chivalrous and adventurous soul. It was with difficulty that he reconciled himself to the white Austrian uniform. He ought to have worn a crusader's coat of mail, or with plumed



hat and laced coat scanned the seas for unknown lands on board a galley. Through the walls of the Hofburg he dreamed of the smell of strange wares borne by ships from the Orient towards Fiume. He yearned for distant lands with deserts and fragrant plants gilded by a great big sun. Therefore he loved the books of Gustave Aimard and the "Romancero." He delighted in exotic collections. My mother had some very precious albums which he brought back from Japan. There were many strange things to be admired at the Castle of Miramar.

Advantage was taken of his love of distant lands to remove him far afield so that he might be forgotten by the people. Every encouragement was given to his inclinations. At the age of nineteen he made his first great sea-voyage on the frigate *Novara*. When, in the cathedral of Granada, he saw the emblems of Ferdinand the Catholic's coronation, a hoop of gold and a sword, he said with pride and melancholy, "It would be a fine dream for the Hapsburg to gird the one in order to gain the other."

But he returned. He succeeded Radetzki as

Viceroy of Lombardy. He was set over the Hungarians as Governor General.

However, he displayed too much indulgence towards the Italians, he was too much liked by the Hungarians . . . so at least his opponents murmured at Vienna. And, it seems to me, at the back of the honours conferred on him, there lurked already the accusation that, making common cause with Italians and Hungarians, he was meditating high treason against his brother the Emperor.

It was not only his brother who distrusted him. At Vienna the princely families of Windischgraetz, Schwarzenberg, Liechtenstein, Lobkowitz, Auersperg, all the conservatism of the old rulers who had been despoiled by Napoleon, formed a sort of entrenched camp against Archduke Maximilian.

So he, who had made a love match with the beautiful Princess Charlotte of Belgium, withdrew himself far from all the hatred in the Castle of Miramar, a white Norman dream among the red rocks of the Adriatic.

But he did not remain there long. While Charlotte rambled in the gardens that bear no roses, while he read romances in the aquarium, the Mexican intrigue was being prepared, the intrigue which

was to bring death to him and madness to his wife.

Although the histories say it was Napoleon III. who offered Maximilian the crown of Mexico, where he had long kept his troops to fight Juarez and the republican movement, very many people at Vienna knew what share Francis Joseph had had in the selection. And they knew his reasons too.

Perhaps the Archduke suspected them, for he hesitated a long time before accepting. First he wanted to be summoned to Mexico by a plebiscite, also that France should guarantee the support of her troops by treaty. Then he refused to renounce his rights to the succession to the Austrian throne, which the Emperor sought to impose.

At last he accepted. Perhaps he hoped to prove stronger than his enemies. It was April 1864.

But at Vienna, in the aristocratic and diplomatic world, the scandal was enormous, although every effort was made to keep the affair secret. The significance of Maximilian's departure for Mexico was clear. The idea was to get rid of him. His friends spoke of it with grief, his enemies with ill-concealed indifference; foreign diplomatists who had learned what was going on sought to take ad-

vantage of the event. And no one made any mystery about it. I have already related how my mother refused a high position at the new Court. It was offered to Countess d'Harmoncourt, who also declined. Being asked her reasons at Prince Schwarzenberg's party, she said, "It is true I have written comedies. But for that very reason I have no desire to take part in a tragedy."

My uncle, Count Oliver de Rességuier, returning from a colloquy with Francis Joseph, from whom he had asked leave to retain his commission in the Austrian navy while he went as Chamberlain to Mexico, met a friend who also wanted to go out with the new Emperor. "I have no family and have made my will," my uncle said to him, "but I should not advise any one who has anything to lose to go where I am going." And he knew what he was talking about, for, as we shall see, he was an instrument of the Court of Vienna in that dark tragedy.

Thus there was much talk at that time about the departure. And those who knew most must have recognised it as a sure preliminary to those Austro-French arrangements which culminated later on in the first meeting of the two Emperors at Salzburg.

With reference to that meeting, Countess d'Harmoncourt has related a serious incident.

"Your Majesty," Francis Joseph said in French, knowing that Napoleon would not have answered a remark in German, though he understood that language, "Your Majesty, I need all your troops in Europe."

To which Napoleon replied coldly, "To the detriment of Your Majesty's brother."

For Maximilian's last support in that unfortunate year 1867 lay in the French troops commanded by the treacherous Marshal Bazaine. The pretext, then, for withdrawing the troops was political necessity. The real motive was the Emperor's implacable hatred of his brother.

It would be futile to speak of the brief Empire of Mexico. It has already been spoken of enough.

As everybody knows, Maximilian encountered huge difficulties at once. The clerical party was against him because he began his reign with liberal reforms; the Liberals were against him because he outlawed ex-President Juarez's soldiers; Bazaine and his Frenchmen were disloyal and weary of the whole business, which was also unpopular in France, where the wits called Vera Cruz, "The French-

men's nursery-garden." And there were threats from the United States, which disliked an Imperial government as a neighbour. Against all these troublesome torrents there was only a mockery of Empire, a Court in a capital, where, after State banquets, two servants were posted at the doors to collect gold forks and silver spoons which high Mexican dignitaries had pocketed as souvenirs.

And what of the Austrian dignitaries? Few came with him; many had already returned home. Among those who remained was Count Oliver de Rességuier, who was chamberlain and confidant of the Emperor of Mexico and at the same time a secret agent for carrying out the dark designs of the Court of Vienna.

The correspondence which passed at that time between the Court and the Austrian capital was voluminous. And if Charlotte, in her supreme anxiety for her husband now that he was abandoned on the outbreak of revolution, left Mexico to implore help in Europe, it was by the advice of Count de Rességuier inspired from Vienna. At least they wanted to save her.

It is this intrigue of Francis Joseph and his partisans through secret agents which has been hid-

den from the general public and which I want to emphasize.

And so Maximilian, forced by the triumph of the republican troops, left Mexico City for Orizaba. When he was advised to seek refuge in Europe, he replied, "A true Hapsburg does not leave his post in the hour of danger." Unfortunate hero, worthy of better times and better men!

The time came to retreat also from Orizaba and seek shelter in the fortress of Queretaro. He bade a sad farewell to his Hungarian guards, whom he left in order to be but a Mexican among Mexicans. He set out one morning galloping between Generals Lopez and Marquez, both of whom afterwards betrayed him. He galloped under the old gigantic trees of the *Hacienda de los Ahuletes*, pondering perhaps over the times when those very trees were pillars of the virgin cathedrals of the Indians, forests where Montezuma celebrated mysterious sacrifices. He beheld the tree which the people named "the tree of night and grief" because Ferdinand Cortez wept there when he was about to be driven out of Mexico. And amid this old poetry he forgot the tragic prose that was choking him; perhaps he derived omens of good hope.

But the sad days of the siege of Queretaro followed. Then, when the situation was already desperate, Maximilian entrusted a huge sum of money in gold and banknotes, perhaps a million, to Count de Rességuier, so that he might go to New York and start a press campaign to influence Juarez through the American public. He was to confer about this with Mr. Havemeyer, the Austrian Consul General at New York, now an American citizen and many times a millionaire.

But events turned out very differently. De Rességuier, who possessed the technical knowledge of a naval officer, sought out Juarez and gave him the plans of the fortress of Queretaro, which he had received from Vienna. He then repaired to New York and had long colloquies with Havemeyer and Count Grünne, Francis Joseph's aide-de-camp, with the result that the American press was filled with ferocious articles against Maximilian, who was meanwhile betrayed into his enemy's hands.

Before the fall of the fortress of Queretaro in distant Mexico, a strange event occurred to disturb the industrious peace of Nisko, the broad estate then belonging to my father in Western Galicia.

Count Oliver de Rességuier arrived there one morning accompanied by Father Fischer and young Prince Iturbide, of the family of the Incas, Maximilian's adopted son. The Count handed over to my mother with much mystery, a number of precious objects, begging her to take care of them. There were huge gold spurs weighing over fifteen pounds, a staff richly ornamented with the crown and monogram of the Emperor of Mexico, and three big purses of Mexican leather stuffed full of doubloons and banknotes.

Presently, a still stranger thing occurred. A messenger, who must have ridden the fifty miles from Raeszow to Nisko without drawing rein, rushed towards the castle clamouring for my uncle. The Count came to meet this man in a great hurry and received a letter. When he had read it, he exclaimed, "Thanks be to God, the million is now irrevocably my property!" And, having recovered the money and jewels from my mother, he departed at once for Vienna with the Bishop of Mexico and the young Indian Prince.

The other incident occurred at Vienna in the Court chapel, the Sistine, so to speak, of the castle of the Hapsburgs: a somewhat moving scene which

disturbed the stately calm of the place for the first time in its long history. It happened at the side of the high altar in an oratory then used almost exclusively by the Archduchess Sophia, mother of Maximilian and the Emperor. At the end of the oratory was a walled window with bits of wood forming a sort of cross in the wall.

The Archduchess came in and knelt down devoutly; behind her were some thirty persons of the Court aristocracy, among whom was my mother; the last to enter was the Emperor, who remained at the back of the oratory. There was a deep silence. Perhaps the courtiers were praying, as etiquette requires them to do. Then all of a sudden the Archduchess' eyes opened very wide and stared at the cross in the wall. She became terribly pale and distressed; she raised her arms to Heaven and, before all her Court, cried in stentorian tones, "Oh! my poor Maximilian, my poor murdered son!"

Then she fell heavily between the two arms of the chair, before the Emporer Francis Joseph could save his mother from wounding her head against the back of the chair. She was carried out in a faint.

That very morning, the 18th of June 1867, her

son Maximilian was shot in the fortress of Queretaro.

Lovely and Christian was the death of the flower of the Hapsburgs and many wept for him in Europe. Nor is he yet forgotten.

But it was sought to impose silence about many things at Vienna. Father Fischer disappeared in some monastery or other; Prince Iturbide was morally buried in a Styrian castle; Count Olive de Rességuier was very speedily made Chamberlain to H. M. the Emperor and Knight of the Order of Malta, with other high distinctions.

Maximilian, brought home in the *Novara,* the same ship in which he had set forth, was buried in the Church of the Capucins between the tombs of Maria Theresa and Marie Louise, the wife of Napoleon I.

But there yet remained another victim of the intrigue to confront those who had conceived it,—Charlotte, the unfortunate Princess, who, after vainly soliciting help from the Courts of Europe, became insane when she received the news of her husband's death.

CHAPTER II

FROM MIRAMAR TO MEYERLING

ALL now recognise the tragic life of the Emperor, all the more tragic because it lasted so long. How strange it seems to recall the fair and nimble lover who muffled his footsteps at dead of night to creep into an alcove. Strange and painful. I cannot bear to think of Œdipus in the garb of Paris. If his face was sad and solemn, let me pretend that it had been always so.

But there was in the early years of Francis Joseph one fact among others which is very intimately related to the mysterious death of Archduke Rudolph. Without this fact nothing can be explained, and I am going to explain the death of Rudolph.

Let us travel then from Miramar to Meyerling. But the way lies through Vienna and we must pause a while at the Hofburg.

The Hofburg is the imperial castle, an enormous magniloquent edifice, proud of many epochs and in many styles, the Olympus of the Hapsburgs.



What other dwellings can boast of a similar succession of occupants? Nor is there any clash of all those epochs and all those styles. A great hall full of thrones and baldaquins still proclaims loudly the Spanish magnificence of Charles V., while a graceful little boudoir with mirrors and twisted cornices reflects the gilded, somewhat tawdry graces of Marie Antoinette of Austria and her most unhappy spouse. There are stones that tell you nothing until you compel them to speak; but the imperial castle of Vienna has a soul of its own for every one of its thousand halls. As a boy I used to admire in one of the courts a monument of Francis II. because even after his death he still remained surrounded by his four wives, Elisabeth, Maria Theresa, Marie Louise and Augusta Caroline; and they had been turned into symbols, compelled that is to represent in marble the virtues of Strength, Wisdom, Labour and Justice. I observed, however, as the people of Vienna had observed before me, that one of the wives was smaller than the others, and that wife represented Justice. . . . Oh! naughty people of Vienna. Still I do not think the faces of all these illustrious ancestors can be very happy today when, from their frames and pedestals, they see

their last descendant pass through the halls weighed down with years and thoughts. A great-grandson at eighty-five? Rather old, I know. But it is not of this one that I wanted to speak. Let us rather hark back to the youth of twenty and thirty.

For that I must refer to my mother's memories.

My mother was hardly ever absent from any of the imperial entertainments. With Countess Anna Erdödy and Countess Wimpffen she was one of the three handsomest and most popular ladies at the Court of Vienna. As we have seen, she frequented it at a very early age, embroidering clothes for charity in the circle of the widowed Empress Maria Caroline Pia. At that time, though she was not yet sixteen, she had been officially affianced to Prince Schwarzenberg who had defeated Napoleon at Leipzig and was about eighty years of age. But Cupid was not as kind to the old general as Mars had been, for before the wedding could take place the god slew him with a shaft that was not a shaft of love. And my mother did not weep for him. I fancy he was mourned only by the fountains which played beneath the lime-trees of his really regal castle.

Three years later, in 1849, she was presented at



Photograph, Paul Thompson.

FRANCIS JOSEPH (1849)



the Court of the new Emperor, Francis Joseph, who had but recently ascended the throne.

It was a very high festival. He wore the highest uniform, which clung to his nimble body as a glittering sheath clings to a sword. My mother has told me how deeply she was impressed by the great beauty of this Slavonic Adonis. She had already seen him many times but only as a simple Archduke; now she admired him as a being far removed from mortal ken.

But the deity condescended very soon; descended and drew nigh.

This indeed, the courtiers whispered, was the defect of the young sovereign: when he was dancing, he came far too close to his partners, he drew much too nigh.

And she had herself occasion to realise him as a very enterprising gentleman. She had sometimes to do as her young friends did when they were commanded to take part in a *Ball-bei-Hof*. Commanded? Yes, because Austrian sovereigns do not ask: they command. But these ungrateful girls used to plead illness so as not to dance with the Emperor.

Now, while I think of it, let me distinguish be-



tween the various festivities which took place at the Hofburg. Etiquette was strict at the Court of Vienna. The ghost of Charles VI., father of Maria Theresa, last of the true Hapsburgs, still breathes through the halls, an attenuated ghost perhaps, but not much faded and certainly not vulgarised. And with this ghost the strictest rules of Spain will survive.

There are two entertainments at Court: the *Hofball* and the *Ball-bei-Hof*. The former is a meagre concession to the hated spirit of the age since the French Revolution opened the most exclusive courts to enriched grocers. It is the great official ball which brings together the descendants of sovereign mediaeval families and the government official whose wife has come to feast her eyes on the "great folk" whom she may never see again. The *Ball-bei-Hof* is rather a private party for those whose birth entitles them to be received on intimate terms: and they are not many in Austria.

The Emperor's demeanour differed entirely at the two entertainments. He was rather reserved at a *Hofball,* much less reserved at a dance among friends.

Indeed, at the official functions he appeared as



cold and aloof as an automaton all buried in gold lace and decorations. All the dances were under pragmatic sanction, all the ladies under pragmatic sanction, every movement under pragmatic sanction. He could concede waltzes and mazurkas only to Archduchesses; for mere Countesses there were quadrilles.

But family functions were quite another pair of pumps. Beneath the very high uniform you could discern the youth of little more than twenty years, a very valiant youth no doubt, but at the same time impetuous and sensual. In fact, he admired fresh handsome women. Why not? He was young and handsome. Besides, he was the Emperor.

But the noble damsels resorted to all sorts of devices to escape him.

Here is an example. At that time there was a very fashionable dance. First the men, that is the Emperor and the noblest lords, took their places in the chief hall with their partners, all the prettiest *Contesseln* or little countesses as they were called with an affectionate diminutive. The old dignitaries, the honest pot-bellied fathers of families, the mothers who hid their elderly bodies in vast crinolines were all banished to adjacent rooms.



Only the young people were admitted to the chief hall.

Now the men grouped themselves on one side, the ladies on the other. There was a big empty space in the middle so that the servants could draw a curtain that hung on a rope from one wall to the other at a little more than a man's height above the floor. It was of rich red velvet, with long gilded fringes that shivered and glittered in the splendour of the illuminations. These fringes, unlike most things in this world, were there for an object. All the girls were drawn up in a row behind the curtain and each had to show a little foot under the fringes, and one hand—I forget whether it was the right or the left—had to be stretched out above the rope.

It was a fancy fair of feet and hands, where the men had to choose partners from these graceful indications. When all the choices had been made, the curtain fell, each claimed his partner and the dance began.

Unless a foreign sovereign was among the guests, the Emperor had the privilege of the first choice, and he was very keen about it, for he had to stand in the middle of the hall with his partner, while the

other couples gathered round him slowly one by one. And in order that his choice might not be left entirely to blind chance, he used, if rumour may be believed, to have recourse to all sorts of strange strategems in collusion with the venal shoemakers of Vienna. The shape or colour of the shoes, some cunning innovation, an eccentric buckle served to betray the little countesses. But they were quick enough to tumble to the game, and, much craftier than he, would exchange their little shoes behind a door or screen, under the very nose of some fat excellency. They were as merry as grigs when their innocent fraud came off. After all, the Emperor's fun was innocent enough, though it led sometimes to disagreeable incidents.

For instance, one evening when the aide-de-camp came up to my young mother to command her to dance with the Emperor, her father, the Count of Strachwitz, an old and very great noble, replied with great firmness and dignity, "I forbid it." And his courage was secretly admired.

But the frivolous dances at the *Ball-bei-Hof* were obviously insufficient for a sturdy young man even though he happened to be Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary.



Did Francis Joseph, then, have love affairs? Perhaps, but that is not our concern, least of all at this terribly grave hour. Still, we must always remember that great men, dominators of the world, are human beings like the rest of us; though they live in the public eye, they have hearts and senses. And we are justified in considering their senses when they affect the heart or public life, when they give rise to events which form part of history.

Now, among the love affairs of Francis Joseph, there is certainly one that was certainly connected with the death of the Crown Prince Rudolph. This then belongs to the domain of history and I propose to relate the facts.

Francis Joseph was married, but his wise courtiers thought that he required a mistress; they were quite observant men, you see.

Poor wretched Emperors! Not being allowed to choose their own loves must interfere sadly with the course of true affection. Not theirs the peasant's wench in the golden sunshine of the fields or the unknown beauty in the whirlpool of high festival or dreamy poetic murmurs in the moonlight. A lady does not go out and do her own marketing when she has a cook to send; and so for the Imper-

ial amours there are special functionaries in every well-ordered Court.

At one time His Majesty had suffered a good deal from epilepsy, perhaps brought on by the shock of an attempt on his life in the Ringstrasse, but his health had considerably improved. Now there were certain Greek bankers or speculators trying to do business with Austria with the object of inflating the value of their anaemic shares. So it came to pass that the incomparable Baron S—— had the happy idea of importing to Vienna the two Greek Princesses, or self-styled Princesses Baldacci, Baldacci or Baldazzi, I don't remember very well. I don't even remember their Christian names, so we will call them Helen and Sophia. What I do remember is that they were rather pretty. The one was tall and fair with very regular features and eyes full of passion; the other was a different kind of jewel, almost a black pearl. They were different, yet strangly alike. My mother, who knew them at that time, told me she had never seen any one so pleasing.

So the two exotic Princesses came to Vienna. They were received at the Palace, had board and



lodging there, were in fact appointed *Hofdamen,* ladies-in-waiting at Court.

How did this happen? The only answer to the mystery was "by order of the Emperor."

The opposition and contempt of the real ladies-in-waiting of the Imperial Court were prodigious. The amorous strategy of His Majesty remained a profound secret. The chatter of evil tongues was unceasing throughout Court circles. I believe that even the sparrows gossiped in their royal nests on the roofs of the Hofburg.

Now I come to a point where there is no documentary evidence. We must rely upon psychological reconstruction. All I have to go upon is what I heard from my mother and Countess Anastasia Wimpffen, who were for a long time associated with the choice made by the discreet agents of his Vécsera. It was she who told them all they knew.

The Emperor seems to have been fairly pleased with the choice made by the discreet agents of his alcove. He dreamed pink dreams as he contemplated the charms of the two new Court ladies. And they, devoted though they were to one another, seemed happy too. For it must be understood quite clearly that neither had the faintest suspicion

of her sister's true position in the household. Each thought she was the Emperor's exclusive favourite. There was far from being the least little germ of jealousy. Indeed each believed that, by sacrificing herself, she had created a high and more respectable position at Court for her beloved sister. The discreet agents of Francis Joseph had devoted all their craft and subtlety and knowledge of the world to keep up this illusion.

The distance of their apartments, the hours of the Imperial visits, the choice of the servants: all was contrived so that the Emperor might hope to go on dreaming his rosy dreams for a very long time.

Meanwhile, the financial interests of Greece prospered exceedingly.

But a serious mistake had been made in estimating the minds of the two Imperial favourites. They were neither cold-hearted intriguers nor mere instruments of pleasure. On the contrary, they had two chaste natures; two different characters, which were presently to reveal themselves.

The revelation happened tragically and suddenly: a thunderbolt that all the lightning-conductors of the Hofburg roofs could not avert. An evening came when one of the two sisters strolled into the

other's apartment without warning and discovered the great mystery. What happened then? There is no means of ascertaining. But next day the Vienna newspapers, meagre enough at that period, announced that one of the well-known Princesses Baldacci had thrown herself into the Danube near the Kaisermühlen for reasons unknown. Only this and nothing more.

But various details leaked out. The corpse had been pulled out at once. It had been caught in the wheel of one of the mills which are worked by the stream, somewhere near the bank. The poor girl, who was a strong swimmer, had tied a heavy stone inside her clothes to make death more certain. There was a terribly deep wound on her beautiful forehead, evidently caused by the wheel, which had been stopped by her body.

As to the reasons for this sad suicide, the sparrows had much food for whispers on the roofs of the Imperial castle. And their whispers were certainly not complimentary to the Emperor.

The other sister's moral awakening was awful. She departed, vowing never to return to the gilded splendour of the Hofburg.



"A husband must be found for her," somebody said. So they looked out for a ruined aristocrat.

But the Imperial agents, after having felt their way cautiously again and again, were forced to recognise the difficulty. The scandal had made far too much noise. It was like a stream that murmurs very low but trickles in everywhere—even below stairs. What man of birth and honour would consent to ally himself with the Imperial "cast-off"?

At that time there was a great slump in the stock of the Greek bankers.

Once more it was the indefatigable Baron S—— who made the magic discovery.

What was the offer? A dowry of three million crowns, incredible wardrobes, a magnificent palace furnished by Imperial favour. Very well. At that price, something could certainly be found in Greece. Something was found in the shape of a self-styled Baron Vécsera, of doubtful title and assets nil, who had turned up at Vienna none knew how or whence.

But the surviving Princess Baldacci was given to him at once, and his barony was confirmed by the Emperor.

A child was born: Marie Vécsera.

This closed the dramatic prelude to a yet more



horrible drama, which, many years later, was to wreak its fury on the only son and heir of the Emperor.

For it was she, little Marie Vécsera, who was to share a strange death with Rudolph, in the stupor of an orgy, among shrubberies of pines, in the solitary Castle of Meyerling.

CHAPTER III

THE TRUTH OF THE TRAGEDY OF MEYERLING

MAXIMILIAN'S fate was unavoidable. He had bared his breast, offered himself as a willing victim; his thoughts had always been transparent. His memory was a sad one, but it was perfumed with tropical plants, bathed in the clear sun of a June morning. A serene passing under a serene sky.

Whenever I think of the death of Maximilian, I see Miramar. That castle which he built for himself also bares its breast bravely to the storms; through a hundred Gothic windows it reveals its whole soul and cries, "Here there are no mysteries;" it drinks in air and light; intolerant of shadows, it has surrounded itself with a sunny solitude. We all know how Maximilian lived and how he died.

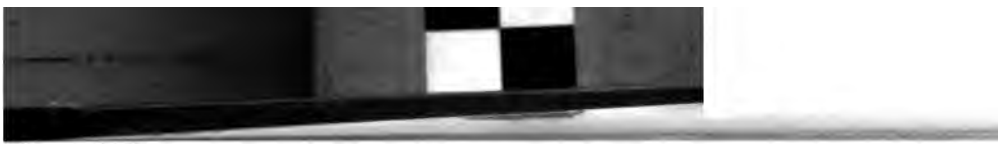
Meyerling is the prisoner of a valley. Limes and pines are its crowded sentinels, now green, now grey, yet always merry. The birds tell it that beyond those costmary woods there is a beautiful blue



sea, and on the other side an endless plain with streams that never hurry, and free Hungarian ponies, and little farms intoxicating themselves with space and revelling in the sun from early dawn to dewy eve. Meyerling dreams of these things. You may espy the dreams on the panes of the windows when they are closed. But the dreams never come to life in this Imperial shooting-box, and it broods sometimes over strange things, it hugs itself in the gloom of its rooms, it assumes a grey, wicked, rebellious aspect.

Perhaps that was why Rudolph loved it.

Rudolph could only have died as he did, for each of us has his own appropriate death; it is only life that is unfair. "Heir apparent, profound student, master of physical exercises, full of virtues: the young Prince has prepared himself wisely for the future crown. Now he ascends the throne. His path is brighter still: wise laws, many wars, some injustice, but the Emperor X. the Third was at heart an excellent sovereign. We all know what he did; all the histories speak of him in the same tone, so there is no more to be said about him." But that sort of verdict means death indeed. Perhaps Archduke Rudolph did not desire anything of the



kind. All through his life he was intelligent, and his intelligence found for him the mysterious tragedy of Meyerling.

At dawn on the 30th of January, 1899, a horrid grey mist settled down upon the lonely shooting-box as it does when the clouds crawl up the valley. A suicide, a crime, a classic bacchanalian orgy, a chaste night of love, a shameless Thaïs, the disillusion of a romantic girl, silent cabs, shots and fisticuffs: many strange melodramas were enacted behind the curtain of that horrid grey mist. The public could have torn that curtain aside, but it would not; it preferred to grope in the realms of fancy, for which Meyerling is famous.

On the morning of the 30th of January, 1889, the news came to Vienna and soon spread everywhere that Archduke Rudolph, the only male child of the Emperor Francis Joseph, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, "Kronprinz Rude," had been found dead in his Castle at Meyerling.

He was in his thirty-first year, having been born on the 21st of August, 1858. On the 10th of July, 1881, he had married Princes Stéphanie of Belgium, from whom he had one child Elisabeth, then five and a half years old.



The news provoked indescribable scenes of grief at Court. The broken-hearted father desired that the funeral should take place in the strictest privacy.

The body was transferred the same day to the capital and remained until Saturday in one of the halls of the Imperial Castle, which had been transformed into a mortuary chapel. Among the innumerable wreaths were those of the widow, Archduchess Stéphanie, of white roses, carnations and lilies of the valley, and that of the daughter, Princess Elisabeth, of musk-roses. The dead Archduke lay in state on Sunday in the private chapel of the Castle and the people filed through in reverent, sorrowing pilgrimage. The burial took place on Tuesday in the cemetery of the Capucins. On the tomb, beside that of Joseph II., eight hundred and thirty-five wreaths were laid.

Condolences came from every part of the world. The Italians mourned the loss of their great admirer. It was only a Trieste committee that found a word of cruel justice: "Francis Joseph is now experiencing the grief which the mother of Oberdan endured."

Thus far, the version of history.

An apoplectic stroke. That was the first official announcement.

Aneurisms at thirty! In a youth who was passionately devoted to riding and shooting and climbing!

Forty-eight hours later the Government admitted suicide.

The Emperor had said, "Let the public know the whole truth."

The whole truth? The public had become suspicious. It believed nothing and it believed everything. It set to work with scissors and paste upon all the news, both true and false, which leaked out little by little.

There were naturally many comments upon the deep wound on Rudolph's head.

At the lying in state, the body had been placed on a very high bier, but one could see something all the same. A deep wound like a great hole under the bandages. And the uncovered part of the temples had been filled up with wax. Men said, "What a hideous butchery!" A revolver shot. No, a gunshot. Nonsense, fire-arms don't tear you to pieces like that. It must have been a club or a big stone. One could swear to that.

Then came the story of the Meyerling gamekeeper, driven to avenge his honour as a husband. This was corroborated by the suicide of the gamekeeper Werner the day after the Prince's death. But he had been on duty that night. It was much more likely that he was overcome by dread of responsibility rather than by remorse.

Then all Rudolph's love-affairs were dragged out into the light of day. Chief among them was his devotion to the young and beautiful Princess Aglaia of Auersperg, the great friend of his sister the Archduchess Marie Valérie. The Princess had dearly loved the chivalrous Rudolph. There was talk of seduction. Prince Charles of Auersperg had avenged the betrayal of his sister. No it was her betrothed, the Prince of Schwarzenberg. There had been an American duel. Rudolph had drawn the black ball and had killed himself three days after. A black ball had been thrown through the window from the garden by a mysterious stranger while the Archduke was reading in his room. Every sort of wild tale went the rounds. An official contradiction was sent out through the Correspondenz Bureau: "Certain foreign newspapers have associated the names of the most illus-



trious families of the Austrian nobility, such as the Auerspergs and the Schwarzenbergs, with the catastrophe of Meyerling. We are authorised to declare that these assertions are pure inventions without any foundation in fact."

Meanwhile, another circumstance had come to change the channels of the chatter. It was kept secret for two or three days, then it leaked out.

Baroness Marie Vécsera, one of the best known girls in Vienna society, though not of the higher aristocracy, had died in the same Castle of Meyerling on the same night of the 30th of January.

How did it happen? Count Hoyos and Duke Philip of Coburg could have told, for they were in the shooting-box with the Archduke and Marie Vécsera. But they told nothing, and the public had to return to the embroideries of their imagination.

Some one said that the Archduke had been shot in the Park and that Marie Vécsera poisoned herself when his body was brought in. This was the more credible because she was known to have a romantic temperament. Rudolph's coachman said he had driven them there in the afternoon; and when he strolled about the grounds at a late hour he perceived them dallying at a window, singing some of



the songs of the hour. But she died of wounds, some one else reported. Then there must have been a double suicide: they had made up their minds to die in each other's arms. The wound was in her spine, said one who knew. In that case, she must have leaped out of bed and tried to escape, whereupon Rudolph stabbed her in the back. All agreed that both bodies had been found stark naked.

There were crumbs of truth in all this, food for many romances, a whole literature, during many years. But the truth remained hidden in the very narrow circle of those who knew.

Denials in high places, romances below. Meanwhile the police pursued their labours. Then one fine day, when they seemed hot on the chase, they were suddenly checked. You can guess what had happened: they had hunted too far up, reached too lofty an eminence.

Still there were certain people who knew the truth all the same. There were those who had had a direct or indirect share in the preparation and development of the tragedy. Among them I may mention my mother's friends, Countess Anastasia Wimpffen and Countess Chorinsky-Mittrowsky. I shall have something to say further on about the



responsibility of Countess Wimpffen, who afterwards killed herself with a terrible poison. Countess Chorinsky, now wife of Prince Auersperg, first married the Lord Chief Justice, who was naturally concerned in the affair to a considerable extent. Being a friend of Countess Wimpffen, she chanced to be present at one of the meetings between Rudolph and Marie Vécsera, which always took place at the Countess' house. All three ladies, that is to say Countess Wimpffen, Countess Chorinsky and my mother, had long known Baroness Vécsera, Marie's mother, ever since she had been known as the Greek Princess Baldazzi; before her sister had thrown herself into the Danube.

I can remember many long evenings when we discussed the tragedy of Meyerling at Mödling, near Vienna, in a *Jägerhaus* or shooting-box belonging to the Sovereign Prince of Liechtenstein. That is to say, they discussed it among themselves, for I was little more than a boy. Besides my mother, Countess Chorinsky-Mittrowsky and her husband, the Lord Chief Justice, were there; also an Italian nobleman, Count Ceschi di Santa Croce, Grand Prior of the Order of Malta.

During those evenings, listening to the talk of



those who had known the very souls of the dramatis personæ, all the secrets behind the scenes, and all sorts of details discovered by the secret police, I lived the whole tragedy over again, and I understood why the public could never penetrate its mysteries; for the lips of those who knew were sealed.

But now, after so many years, there is no reason for continuing to hide what really happened, even though the new light may cast much responsibility upon a woman who can still plead many extenuating circumstances: namely, the greatness of the offence which had been put upon her; perhaps too, a failure to foresee the tragic consequences of her revenge. I allude to the lady who is now only Countess Lónyay and ought to have been Empress of Austria.

Stéphanie, the widow of the Archduke.

Rudolph: According to history, he was a very intelligent, extravagant, sensual prince. He was brought up very strictly and his instincts led him to rebel against authority. He was not a politician, for he always said just what he thought in the frankest way and was quite incapable of concealing his political likes and dislikes. For instance, he went off ostentatiously to hunt bears in Transylvania at



the time when the German Emperor William II. came to visit the Court of Vienna; on the other hand he was indiscreet enough to admire the Italians. He was a great lover of nature, and he paid his court to nature, galloping across snowy plains, compassing sea and land, climbing mountains in pursuit of sunrises and sunsets, crashing through forests after a wounded bird or a rare songster. He was at the same time a scientist and a poet. But, history will relate, he did not know how to govern his passions. He was violent and quarrelsome. He had innumerable love-affairs and made no secret about any of them. Even matrimony imposed no restraint upon him. He persevered in his vices with redoubled ardour, flaunting his infidelities in his wife's face like a banner of liberty; he even threatened to divorce her in order to marry a plain, almost humble girl to whom he was madly attached. There was never an orgy in which he failed to take part, never a pleasure that he did not want to try. He died a victim of his dissolute life at the Castle of Meyerling in his thirty-first year.

That is what history will relate. But I imagine that a drama far deeper than that of his death may perhaps have been hidden away in his life. Hav-



ing in his veins the decrepit blood of a family that goes back a thousand years, and a latent madness through his mother, Elisabeth of Bavaria; breaking all the laws of morals and tradition in a Court where morals and tradition are placed above the dogmas of religion; despising his future crown in comparison with drunken orgies: this strange Prince seems to me to afford one of the most complicated and interesting characters of modern times.

Stéphanie: Daughter of Leopold, King of the Belgians, was very young when she married Archduke Rudolph of Austria. Some said it was a love-match, but I shall have something to say about the real political reasons later on.

Anyhow, it was a very unhappy marriage. When she came to Vienna, Stéphanie cannot have failed to remember her aunt, the unfortunate Charlotte. Even the Emperor, though he had secretly desired the match, did not look upon her with favour, and the Empress Elisabeth always treated her very coldly. She also suffered a good deal on account of the matrimonial misadventures of her sister Louise, the wife of Philip of Coburg, her husband's most constant associate in debauch. Above all, there was the terrible infidelity of Rudolph. One can under-



Photograph, Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.

PRINCESS STEPHANIE OF BELGIUM





stand how the Archduchess must have locked up in her heart whole store-houses of hate. Then there were low intriguers always trying to take advantage of her discontents, and they induced her to shoot an arrow that travelled much further than she had ever anticipated. That she certainly regretted.

I knew Stéphanie. She used to take a walk every day in the beautiful Dobbelhof Park, which adjoined Baden near Vienna, and she preferred solitary paths. I often went there with my mother. And one day when she was specially sad, Stéphanie sat down on a bench and took me on her knees. I gazed at her with the indiscreet, scrutinising wonder of a child: I wanted to read the face of the future Empress. It was not beautiful, but full of expression. The chin and nose had a manly strength that contrasted with her pink complexion and her great floods of fair hair. Then I saw only her big staring eyes of a greyish blue that seemed to reflect the sky. Now, when I try to recall her, they seem to blend themselves in one, and it watches me, a huge, strange, inexorable eye.

Marie Vécsera: A child, but by no means an ordinary child. She was the daughter of the exotic Princess Baldazzi and the providential Baron



Vécsera. Some think she was the Emperor's daughter and there was certainly a very remarkable likeness between her and Rudolph. But we need not complicate a drama that is already quite sad enough. Though her mother was rich and lived in a splendid palace, she was not received at Court or by high society on account of the old scandal. She was a mere shadow in the social world, and Marie was ambitious. There has been endless talk about her relations with Archduke Rudolph, but I do not know how much of it is true. Did she dream of becoming Empress one day? Who knows? Was Rudolph really in love with her or merely carried away by sensual desires? Who knows? Let us suppose that, like other girls, she was divided into three equal parts governed by her heart, her senses and her ambition. Was she pretty? Most beautiful according to the legend, but that is not true. She was short and rather stumpy, but she had a white skin and pretty, sad, black eyes.

THE OTHER CHARACTERS

Not all of them. I will just allude to two—the one who began and the other who completed the drama.

The prologue and the epilogue of Greek tragedies.

Countess Anastasia Wimpffen: An old countess of the Empire, which means that her title was also good for Germany; an experienced courtier who had fallen into disgrace and who was unhappy about her exclusion from the higher society of Vienna, the more so as she possessed a fine palace and a big fortune. Despairing of recovering the good graces of the old Emperor, she was glad to secure those of his naughty son by affording him opportunities of meeting the little Baroness in her salon, which the wits dubbed the *salon des refusées*. She became a sort of bridesmaid to the Archduke's intrigues. But her refined, unscrupulous mind did not exclude remorse. For, when she had vainly sought to arrest the consequences of her work, she sought oblivion in the quick death provided by cyankali. How dramatically, we shall see by and by.

Last comes *Baron Baldazzi,* the real protagonist, the *deus ex machina* of the tragedy. He was summoned to Vienna by the busy Baron S—— one day when Francis Joseph was making violent efforts to break off the scandalous affair between Rudolph and Marie Vécsera. Baldazzi was to have played

the part assigned to Baron Vécsera twenty years previously when the latter married the former's sister or cousin (I forget which), the Greek Princess Baldazzi. Instead of playing that part, Baron Baldazzi played that of the avenger.

And so it came to pass that the soft, discreet oriental saloons of the Countess Anastasia were filled with silence during the first whispers of love between a romantic girl and a chivalrous Archduke. They certainly respected the proprieties at the outset, and I like to think that it was so.

Rudolph was weary of waiting for the crown, tired of a wife he did not love, bored perhaps by the monotony of his dissolute life, and it was natural that he should find it sweet to sit in a corner of the silent saloon beside a girl who was neither venal nor a courtesan. Nor could the girl fail to appreciate the fascination of the personality and conversation of Rudolph, who was a poet as well as her future Emperor.

Countess Anastasia sat smiling to herself in another room, full of honest pleasure.

But the chaste and romantic love soon degenerated into a passion worthy of Heliogabalus and Messalina. How? We do not know. We cannot

penetrate the unfathomable soul of this most strange Archduke. Marie was certainly led on by him. When? We do not know that either. Probably when the daily meetings developed into nightly ones. The Archduke was seen to go in and out of Countess Wimpffen's house at the small hours. Many cautious figures were already dogging all his footsteps.

And when every voluptuous artifice had been exhausted, the voluptuous circle was extended. That was one of Rudolph's most conspicuous forms of degeneration; his soul loved solitude, but for orgies he required company.

The scandal spread, for Rudolph was not the man to keep his adventures secret. But too many people were now affected and the affair could not have a pleasant ending.

Archduchess Stéphanie, for reasons already mentioned, was like a cloud charged with electricity, ready at any moment to launch her thunderbolt. The infidelity had been too patent, it was in everybody's mouth, and it shook her out of her usual attitude of proud contempt. Miserable agents volunteered their services, informed her of times, places and persons, and gradually increased their ascen-

dancy over her mind. Among them was a man called Schaeffer, manager of the Argus detective agency. It is interesting to notice, among the Princess' innumerable photographs, the deep ravages which rancour, if not grief, worked on her characteristic face at this time.

Francis Joseph and his uncompromising partisans were more angry about this affair than they had been about any of the past follies of the Archduke. Marie's mother, the sovereign's old flame, was seized with a holy horror of this intrigue and set to work to end it with surprising zeal. She sought an audience of the old Emperor, and this was much commented upon. It was now that her brother or cousin, Baron Baldazzi, appeared on the scenes and was betrothed to the wayward girl. But he was not the man one might have thought. He soon proved to be rather the guardian of the family honour than the convenient bridegroom. He installed the reign of terror.

But none of these events could alarm Archduke Rudolph. He reasoned with Countess Wimpffen, who was growing frightened about the possible consequences of the affair; he defied his wife, who was now being informed of everything by Schaeffer; he

soothed Baron Vécsera with flattery and diamonds; Marie succeeded for some time in calming rather than deceiving the jealous Baldazzi; and so they continued their amours undismayed.

Countess Anastasia shut up her palace in a panic. Stéphanie, with her hair on end like a Fury, rushed about with her detectives, and urged the Emperor to employ the police to stop the scandal. She seems also to have had a very violent scene with Marie's old father.

And one fine day, Archduke Rudolph, who had quite made up his mind not to be bullied, set out for his shooting-box at Meyerling in the neighbouring Wienerwald.

He did not go alone or secretly, but set out in his usual landau, which was driven by the faithful cabman who took him to all his orgies. Marie Vécsera was with him. Other carriages followed with the usual boon-companions of his shooting and other expeditions: his Cousin Philip of Coburg, Count Hoyos, two stalwart Alpenjäger and many good bottles of champagne.

The Castle of Meyerling is about 18 miles from Vienna. The road passes through mountains and plains to Mödling, then creeps into a wooded val-

ley, passes Gaaden and the Abbey of Heiligenkreuz, and rises to the solitude of the pine-trees of Meyerling. Thence there is another valley that goes down to the little town of Baden and the railway from Vienna. The Archduke's carriages were seen on their way through Mödling and Gaaden.

Meanwhile a conference was going on between the Archduchess Stéphanie and Schaeffer at Vienna, and this was immediately followed by another conference between Schaeffer and Baldazzi and Marie's mother. It is difficult to reconstruct their conversation. There was certainly no mandate for murder on the part of either Stéphanie or Marie's mother. There was probably an incitement to provoke a scandal or even to use threats. But Baron Baldazzi exceeded any such instructions by a very long way.

He took a Remington rifle, perhaps under pretence of a shooting-expedition, and set out in the afternoon by the Südbahn railway to Baden. There he took a carriage and drove up the Helenenthal, the other valley leading to Meyerling. But he sent back the carriage before he reached Meyerling. Then he took to the woods, where he was seen by two monks from Heiligenkreuz.

Night was closing in.

The usual orgy took place at Meyerling that evening to the accompaniment of much champagne, while the snow reigned over the whole world without.

But what of the coachman who said he wandered about the woods and saw the two lovers singing sad songs at the window? Perhaps he never said so. Perhaps he wanted to disconcert inquisitive chatterers. But it may have been true. Rudolph had such an odd mind that there was nothing improbable about his devoting the intervals of an orgy to dreaming at the window, to the melancholy contemplation of the shadows of the night, to an exchange of whispers with the solitary pine tree which stood like a sentinel at the side of the road.

And it was from that very pine-tree that death came to them.

For at a very late hour, Baron Baldazzi stood beneath it. There is a ditch between the road and the Castle, so that the trunk of the pine-tree is on a level with the first floor. Baldazzi looked through the window and beheld a revolting scene in the flickering light. In the background, on a bed in an alcove, the Archduke Rudolph and Marie Vécsara



slept in each other's arms. On a divan, on the floor, even under the table, lay Philip of Coburg, Count Hoyos and the two Alpenjägers, all dead drunk. Empty bottles of champagne were scattered about all over the place. The candles were expiring in their sockets.

Then Baldazzi fired without the least hurry or excitement. He fired at his betrothed and at the heir to the Austrian throne. He was a crack shot and he struck both through the heart.

Then he was seized with mad fury. He threw away his gun, which was afterwards found by the servants of the Abbey, climbed down into the ditch, swung himself up to the low window whose panes had been broken, entered the room, seized an empty bottle and battered the heads of the two dead lovers. Bits of glass were afterwards found right inside their brains.

Very early the same morning, Count Hoyos and Philip of Coburg hurried off to Vienna to announce the death of the Archduke.

That is the true story of the tragedy of Meyerling.

Naturally the police stopped its feverish secret inquiries as soon as it found they were leading it



where it did not want to go. Baldazzi went off to France, but without the least hurry. The Baldazzi and Vécsera families had to sell their property and leave Austria; even the memory of their names was blotted out, but all with the discreetest silence. Countess Anastasia Wimpffen, tormented by remorse, poisoned herself with cyan-kali, a terrible drug. She chose to die on the very divan where, through her good offices, Rudolph and Marie had enjoyed their first embrace. She was found all shrivelled up.

Rudolph was buried in the Church of the Capucins at Vienna, Marie Vécsera at the Abbey of Heiligenkreuz near Meyerling.

I went one day to Meyerling in the year 1902 and I stood under the pine-tree.

There was bright sunshine out of doors, and only the dim light of a few candles in the room, so that I could scarcely distinguish anything. Then I gradually made out an altar over there, where the alcove used to be, and a light hung from the ceiling, and images of saints of the Hapsburg family stood out rigidly against the walls. The room had been turned into a chapel.

Then I distinguished human shapes all bowed



and humble: poor old men and women who are supported by the Emperor so that they may pray for the dead Archduke.

They take turns to pray, night and day. They must pray only for him. But I feel sure that some of the old women pray also for the other victim in their secret hearts. For she alone, poor Marie, died there perhaps for love.



CHAPTER IV

THE PECULIARITIES AND VIRTUES OF THE EMPRESS ELISABETH

I REMEMBER a summer day when I was returning from the grand manoeuvres. We were all soldiers in the railway carriage. Outside were melancholy plains, vast parallelograms of corn, the blue curve of a river, a light grey sketch of mountains far far away. Some of the Slavs looked dreamily out of the window with half-closed eyes, while most of us, merry youths from Vienna, sang one song after another.

There was a long wait at a little station. Then some officers came into the carriage.

"You must stop singing," they said—"the Empress has been assassinated!"

I won't deny that there was a certain feeling of shock and we all became respectfully silent. But no one was distressed. The Slavs went on looking out of the window, watching the fields speed by; some Hungarians may have said a few words of sym-

pathy; I, who had seen her so many times, realised a vague void because I should see her no more. Presently, young Ripper, son of the Court hatter, observed with a shrug, "Sad affair. But the Empress always seemed a foreigner."

That was all.

That summer day in 1898 the Empress Elisabeth of Austria had been killed at Geneva by the Italian Luccheni.

There were a good many biographies of the dead Empress, fairly accurate as far as they went. A strange woman who knew few joys in her life, full of the torments of her dolours and her latent madness. But the biographies only mentioned such eccentricities as had filtered through the closed walls of the Hofburg and a hundred other Imperial castles.

I can tell you a great deal more, for my mother was lady-in-waiting during many years, and my aunt, Countess Marie Festetics-Tolna was the Empress' devoted companion in her saddest hours. I can describe the character of one who was called to the Austrian throne and yet persisted in remaining a stranger to her family and people.

Many, many years ago, there lived in Bavaria a



certain Duke Maximilian of the illustrious House of Wittelsbach, which counts the three Ottos among its forbears. This Duke belonged to the younger branch. His title was Herzog *in* Bayern, for that of Herzog *von* Bayern belongs only to the reigning House. A very great noble with many children and not much money. One of his daughters was very pretty and very odd. Her prospects were to grow old in some turreted castle, or to grow fat as the abbess of some convent, or to marry some German Count. But destiny ordained otherwise. One evening at Ischl, a fashionable watering-place near Salzburg, she met the young Emperor of Austria at a ball. He was very evidently enamoured of the quaint, graceful girl and committed the great indiscretion of dancing with her all the evening.

He was then twenty-two and she was barely sixteen. He was a powerful sovereign and she was a poor little princess. For all that, he asked for her hand and their wedding was speedily celebrated.

Thus did Elisabeth become Empress.

But Francis Joseph's choice was a bad one, although, for once in his life, he had allowed himself to be guided by his heart. Perhaps that is the reason why the sovereign, realising how badly he had



been advised by Mr. Cupid, proceeded to place his heart under lock and key, never to open its doors again. The life of Francis Joseph is one long, terrible fairy-tale and this idyll of Ischl with all its matrimonial consequences affords one of its most incredible chapters. To begin with, the new Empress was poor,—that is to say, financially far inferior to the ladies of the Austrian aristocracy, who behaved very impertinently to her on that account. Secondly, she was a descendant of the House of Wittelsbach and the Counts of Schyren, and if she did not inherit monies she inherited a decided tendency to madness. Our thoughts turn at once to her mad and gifted cousin, Louis II. of Bavaria, King and musician. The ties of relationship between the electoral House of Bavaria and the Hapsburg-Lorraines only aggravated this tendency. Perhaps, if he had had a different mother, Rudolph might have escaped the tragedy of Meyerling.

When Elisabeth entered the Hofburg as a sovereign, she must have relegated her previous life to the domain of fable.

"Once upon a time there was a strange, beautiful princess, and a fair young monarch, very rich and very powerful, fell wildly in love with her . . ."



She would ponder over memories of an old grandmother who sat by an enormous mediaeval chimney, while wintry winds raged round the melancholy Bavarian castle, undressing the pine-trees for patient snows to tuck them up again. Such memories seemed very vague and far away at first, then she sighed for them with a sense of home-sickness. The crown of Maria Theresa is no light burden.

What were the relations of Francis Joseph and Elisabeth during the first years of their marriage? The biographies related that two children, Gisella and Rudolph, soon made their appearance; clouds also made a speedy appearance on the Imperial horizon. But we will first pause to consider the shadow which the clouds cast upon the pretty face of the youthful sovereign.

My mother was invited to the first Court function of the new Empress. Later on, during the years of misfortune, she would often recite all the particulars so vividly that, when I close my eyes, I seem to have been present myself.

The great hall was furnished and decorated in the days of Marie Antoinette. The style is that of Louis XVI., but Vienna has disguised it with much gilding and all sorts of painted flowers, yielding to

a mania for the baroque. All the halls are very like what children dream of when you tell them fairy-tales about royal palaces. They are so huge that they seem to have neither walls nor ceilings; you see nothing but a sparkle of light in a cloud of gold, and the night appears terrible through the great cathedral windows. The floor is like a glass mosaic, and a solitary page seems to be suspended in space as he floats about on an errand.

Now let us people these halls with the marvellous crowd which throngs round a powerful Court. Knights and dames await the entrance of the Sovereigns. There is a glitter of jewels and gold and silver lace, all according to rule, pearls reflect themselves softly like the moon in a lake, mantles of many colours appear like a cloud of butterflies. There are thousands of candles up aloft. Sometimes a dash of red strikes the eye against the background of white and gold; like a poppy in a field of corn. There are many pale faces in the solemn atmosphere.

I recall Princess Schwarzenberg among the great ladies. Her dress is of brown gold sewn with hundreds and hundreds of rubies. The Princess of Liechtenstein is in point d'Alençon picked out with

turquoises. My mother wears satin of crushed strawberry embroidered all over with sprigs of gold, a dress I have since seen among her greatest treasures. All three have the gorgeous Court mantle attached to their shoulders by jewelled clasps which differ according to the lady's rank. But the precious stones are the marvel of the Court of Vienna. To this day, you must go to a high function at the Court of Vienna or Petrograd in order to behold the utmost profusion of historical gems. You might have seen Maria Theresa's girdle of brilliants and Marie Louise's head-dress of emeralds which has not its equal in the world. It now belongs to the Princess of Montenuovo.

And even the men have their note of colour. Here are the green and silver uniforms of the Truchsess, the sky-blue coats of the Chamberlains with gold lace worth some thousands of florins, the tiger-skins and purple trousers of the Royal Hungarian guard, the scarlet and gold of the body-guard of archers, the wonderfully variegated costumes of the magnates of Hungary and Slavonia, the white cloaks and black crosses and silver helmets of the Knights of Malta, the full dress uniforms of generals with light green plumes, the

Knights of the Order of the Golden Fleece with tunics of dark purple velvet, cloaks lined with ermine and shoulders cascading priceless jewels. And the picture is all the more beautiful because the colours do not remain stationary but blend into one another and flit away from one another and form themselves into fresh kaleidoscopes.

The glittering stream has come hither in many rivulets, each according to rank, up the various staircases of the Hofburg, where members of the Imperial family, ambassadors, dignitaries and officials all have their different stairs. They range themselves to right and left of the first halls, forming a hedge along the walls according to complicated and inexorable rules. There is some talk in undertones, discreet whispering, the rustling of silk, the flutter of fans. Then even these subdued sounds are hushed. From afar off, approaching very slowly, you hear the Grand Master of the Ceremonies giving staccato stabs to the pavement with his staff of ivory and silver. Count Hunyady announces the entrance of the Court. The huge doors are thrown open, and the Imperial procession advances amid a solemn silence. The Emperor walks on his consort's right; others walk on their

wives' left, an endless chain of Archdukes and Archduchesses, royal and Imperial Highnesses.

But all eyes are fixed upon the new Empress.

She is really very beautiful. Her dress is of cloth of gold with a train several yards long borne by six pages. Round her slim waist is the diamond girdle of fat Maria Theresa. On her neck is the famous brilliant of Charles the Bold, known as "the Florentine," an enormous drop of light. On her head is the Hapsburg crown of diamonds, worth say £1,500,000. Her face is pale. She is trying to be gay, but her smile is sad. The men admire her, but the very rich and noble princesses of Austria cast a glance of disdain upon the upstart Empress.

The Sovereigns pass through the halls, bowing coldly to the deeply bowing lines, and seat themselves on their thrones. Then the courtiers advance in pairs and are honoured at most by half a minute's conversation. The Empress' brain is tired. It does not rise to the exigencies of a moment that is really a very important one for her. All will repeat her words during many days. But her words are always the same for all the hundreds of ladies who are presented to her. She seems to have learned them by rote. "Do you like Vienna?" "I hope

you are well." "Did you dance much last season?" The courtiers smile sarcastically about it afterwards. Poor new Empress! Her first appearance has not been a success. She has won no golden opinions, attracted no sympathies.

It was not many years after the Imperial wedding. My mother was riding one day in the Prater with Princess Odescalchi, a good horsewoman, and a Marchesa Pallavicini. It was an October morning; the trees were already bare or yellow, there was a smoky mist on the ground among their trunks, the atmosphere was silent in a sulky way. They rode along the Noble Avenue without talking. And in a byway which is separated from the main thoroughfare by a thick hedge of trees they perceived another rider. It was the young Empress. She dismissed a couple of servants with an impatient nod, made her horse walk and then burst into violent sobs. Naturally she imagined herself to be quite alone.

My mother was deeply moved by the sight of this Empress seeking refuge among the trees to weep over her disillusions. Disillusions, or perhaps sorrows already. For she, poor little Princess without fortune or experience, extravagant, original



and kind, coming to the Hofburg with a heart full of affection for her subjects, had soon found herself repelled by those who were nearest to her person. She had felt very much alone under the tutelage of the terrible Auersperg and Schwarzenberg dowagers, old mediatised sovereigns, and others much richer than herself. They carried on a campaign of pin-pricks, that sometimes drifted into open rebellion. Princess Schwarzenberg, one of the haughtiest and most inhuman, was finally threatened with exile by Francis Joseph, but I do not think she ever made her submission, and the whole conflict affected Elisabeth's spirits. It dried up all sympathy for her surroundings. She became reserved and suspicious. Her dislike of everything Austrian and more especially of everything Viennese undoubtedly dates from this period, as well as her devotion to Hungary. She was alone, and her loneliness was further embittered when she perceived she was losing the love of the fair monarch who had taken her away from her melancholy Bavarian castle. Francis Joseph soon began to be unfaithful to her; as the whole Court knew. It was this knowledge which hurt her most, for the open neglect of her husband was specially humiliating in

the presence of the rebellious and impertinent Viennese aristocracy.

Shut up in her solitude, a stranger to her people, she gave way to various extravagances, without, however, becoming absolutely mad, like her poor cousins.

First her unhealthy horror of all festivities, her refusal to appear in public, her ill-concealed hatred of Vienna were the worst symptoms. Then a roaming fit impelled her to run about among the watering-places of Europe.

Elisabeth was a wonderful horsewoman. She was as much at home in the saddle among the wild slopes of the Carpathians as on the well-beaten paths of the Prater. She took part in all the great hunts and often travelled half across Europe for stag-shooting or pigsticking. Nor was there anything strange about that, for the chase has been a royal sport from olden times.

But her passion for equestrian exercises was carried to strange lengths which displeased her august consort, the Emperor. Indeed, it reached such a point that she used to put on a circus dress and dance and leap on the backs of her magnificent horses and break no less than six paper hoops in

one bound. This in the little circus which she had built at her own expense in one of the courts of the Hofburg in spite of the strenuous opposition of Francis Joseph.

Her infatuation for dogs was also extravagant and she kept almost as many of them as there are sands on the sea-shore. She treated them like Princes of the blood and great fun was made of this at Vienna. The Imperial carriages were often seen driving in the Prater with coachmen in liveries of state and the Empress' favourite dogs filling the seats of honour with great dignity. The back seats were occupied by old and faithful retainers, also in full livery. They had the strictest orders to take every care of Her Majesty's pets and always to address them in the third person. Worthy citizens who visited the park for an afternoon nap have vouched for such conversations as these:

"Will Bella have the goodness not to bark so much?" an old servant was heard to implore.

And another would add, "If Bella will not condescend to desist, it will be my regretful duty to lay the matter before our most gracious Sovereign."

But the dogs did not deign to reply.

Her manias were all very innocent. For in-



stance, she had a great dislike of being photographed. She would hide her face behind a fan with a quick characteristic movement whenever she caught sight of a camera.

Her restlessness was constantly increasing. She often refused to see even her own children. It was impossible for her to remain long in one place.

Then she took to expeditions on horseback to strange destinations at still stranger hours. My aunt, Countess Marie Festetics, has told me how she had sometimes to accompany her Imperial Majesty at mid-night in the most awful weather for mad gallops where they risked their necks at every step in order to reach the bald summit of the Kahlenberg.

Then, Heaven knows why, the mania for riding was suddenly succeeded by that for very long walks among the mountains near Vienna, or from one to another of the hundred Imperial castles.

Having lived for four years in the castle of the sovereign Prince of Liechtenstein above Mödling, near the castles of Meyerling, Luxemburg, Hietzin and Schönbrunn, I can follow step by step all the terrible expeditions which the Empress undertook with my aunt, Marie Festetics, who used to follow

her with her tongue hanging out of her mouth, like some unfortunate dog that has run too far and can run no more.

Here is a typical excursion. The two ladies started one morning from the Castle of Schönbrunn. They crossed the gigantic Thiergarten, rested at Villa Quisisana, the house of Mark Twain's great friend, Dr. Winternitz, and climbed a mountain called Höllenstein (the infernal stone), a granite peak amid many calcareous hills. They visited another big zoological garden, which belonged to Prince Liechtenstein, and admired a poetical little green lake there among the pines. They climbed to the top of the Amminger, came slowly down to the big ruins of Rauhenstein, and stopped at length at Jammerpepi's rustic little ice-cream shop, which is hidden away among the solitudes of the mountains.

This Jammerpepi was a strange woman, as original as her nickname which means Wailing Josephine. This rich confectioner used to bewail her poverty at the top of her voice whenever she saw the Empress Elisabeth approach her house, and Her Majesty must have left a small fortune in the woman's hands. Finally, having walked down to

the Castle of Weihlburg, the ladies came back to Vienna by carriage. But they had climbed two small mountains and covered more than twenty-five miles on foot.

The Empress was indefatigable. Still, she would sometimes fling herself down upon the grass as though overcome by infinite weariness. Then she would suddenly jump to her feet and resume her walk.

With her unrelenting aversion from all that was Austrian and Viennese, with her rather exaggerated affection for Hungary, the Empress exercised an influence which the public has not realised to this day.

She laboured with great tenacity and ingenuity for the transfer of the Court from Vienna to Budapest. She, a German, had, perhaps unconsciously, attempted to carry out Bismarck's political testament, which may be summed up in these few words: Eliminate Austria from Central Europe. The very severe restrictions which the Court of Vienna imposed on itself during the years preceding her death were partly her work. She encouraged and favoured with all her influence every plan for interesting the House of Hapsburg substantially in the

welfare of Hungary. The construction of the marvellous Imperial castle of Budapest, the restoration of the famous Hungarian castle of Gödöllo, the many millions lent by the Imperial house to the half-ruined Hungarian nobles were all inspired by her.

The Empress was at the same time extravagant and miserly, to the great perplexity of her biographers.

Again and again the imperial administrators protested against her insane expenditure. Her journeys from one end of Europe to the other were very costly. Her long sojourns at Cap Martin Hotel near Mentone cost the Imperial treasury almost as much as an unfortunate war would have cost the State. She lavished amazing sums upon the construction of the famous Achilleion at Corfu, and it seemed as though she delighted to increase her expenditure according to the increasing vigour of the protests.

The drop of rebel blood in Rudolph's veins certainly came to him from his mother, the strange and beautiful Elisabeth, Empress of most Catholic Austria, who (horrible to relate!), in defiance of God and men, actually worshipped the Hebrew poet



Heine, that same Heine who had dared to ridicule Marie Antoinette, Austria, Germany, and most of the rest of the world. Indeed, she did not hesitate to erect a magnificent monument to his memory in the courtyard of the Achilleion.

And I may mention in parenthesis that when the Emperor William II. hastened to buy this palace at the cost of huge pecuniary sacrifices, it was not, as some have surmised, to honour the memory of the late Empress, but to have the right of destroying the offensive statue, a right that he lost no time in exercising.

The people of Vienna did not appreciate or love the Empress, but rather returned her obvious antipathy and spread many malicious rumours about her avarice. Whether there was any foundation for them I do not know, but I mention one of them as an example. It was said that the Empress fell into the big lake of Luxemburg one day and was rescued after great efforts by a genuine Viennese, whereupon, after some hesitation, she sent her saviour the enormous sum of twenty florins.

The which proves how difficult it is to restrain evil tongues.

But the most signal expression of Elisabeth's

warm regard for all things Viennese lay in her employment of Mr. Wetschl. Tradesmen, courtiers and servants squealed about it for a time just as though their gracious Sovereign had trod on all their tails.

He proved a great find for the Empress.

For it was this terrible Mr. Wetschl who introduced the fiercest and most incredible economy into the Court administration. He devoted all his energies to one object, the abolition of all illicit profits at Court, from those of the highest dignitaries to those of the meanest bootblacks. You can imagine what a frightful business this must have seemed.

For illicit profits were by no means few and far between at the Hofburg. Let me edify you by citing an example. One day in some year or other of the eighteenth century, the Empress Maria Theresa found herself slightly indisposed. So after consulting her Dutch doctor, she ordered a bottle of sweet Spanish wine for her dinner. Two or three florins did not seem to matter much, for the House of Hapsburg is by no means poor. But what does matter is that, from that day down to the commencement of Mr. Wetschl's terrible administration, the bottle of sweet Spanish wine continued to



figure regularly on the daily accounts of the Court. The bottle no longer appeared on the Imperial table because Maria Theresa has now been dead quite a long time, and the two or three florins must have accumulated to a very big sum at compound interest in the course of a century. But the abolition of this item was regarded as sacrilege. The courtiers of the Hapsburgs are all conservatives.

Another example. The very abundant leavings of the *Hoftafel,* such as venison, boxes of sweets at twenty or thirty crowns each, creams and fruits of every kind, the choicest wines, were all sold by the servants, at fairly stiff prices, to the Court caterers, who sold them again to the Imperial administrators or to some rich family with ambitions to rival the Hofburg.

The terrible Wetschl abolished this custom too. Naturally the lamentations of the servants went up to Heaven, and Vienna enjoyed a good laugh.

Third and last examples. The Imperial gardens are of very great value. The rarest water-lilies, lotuses, magnolias, roses and fuchsias (such favourites with Elisabeth that she had jewels made to resemble them), all the marvellous flowers were at the disposal of the servants and more particularly

of the ladies-in-waiting. Even here the terrible Wetschl appeared with severe regulations. One of his first victims was my aunt, Countess Festetics, who picked a few Gloire de France roses and was promptly made to pay a fine. The courtiers protested loudly and the blame for all these innovations was laid at the Empress' door.

It was natural that all the distrust and dislike should make the Empress feel more and more of a stranger at Court. The poor woman had no one to support her there. She could hope nothing from her family, for her branch had been superseded in Bavaria by the hostile branch of the Prince Regent Luitpold. He had been the most strenuous adversary of her unhappy cousins, Louis II., who was drowned at night in the lake of Stahremberg, and his brother who died mad in the little castle of Fürstenried. Nor could she rely on her new Austrian family, whose chief characteristic was a canny egotism which pursued its erotic and financial caprices. Nor on her consort, the Emperor Francis Joseph, whose vacillating and uncertain attitude was quite useless for safeguarding her interests in the face of his people and Court.

And finally the tragic death of her beloved son



Rudolph came as a crowning grief to a mind bowed down with misery and madness.

Her mourning assumed proportions that suggested mania. She always dressed in black and would never again consent to appear in public. As far as I can remember, there was only one occasion on which she attended a State ceremony, and that was when Nicholas II. came to Vienna in 1895, in the course of his tour of visits on ascending the throne. Great efforts were required to induce the Empress to appear at the Hoftafel, and when she did appear it was in a dress that loudly proclaimed her grief,—black velvet and red poppies, flowers of death and sleep. Her behaviour was no less strange. The toasts had been previously prepared by the respective ministers of the two great sovereigns. Francis Joseph rose first and recited his speech word for word, but the Empress, though she rose to her feet, omitted to raise her glass. And great was the sensation, when the Czar, who had noted the fact, said in reply, "I drink to the health of his Majesty the Emperor and King, and to that of her Majesty the Empress." Only this and nothing more.

I remember that on the following day, a Vienna



NICHOLAS II. EX-TSAR OF RUSSIA



newspaper made the following comment: "The attitude of the Emperor of Russia finally dissipates the clouds which still obscured his real intentions." First skirmishes preluding the gigantic war of today.

Her last years were very sad. She fled from place to place in the vain pursuit of oblivion.

And one day, while she was watching the ripples of the lake of Geneva with eyes still strange and beautiful, a blade stabbed her through the heart, and oblivion came at last.

CHAPTER V

THE ADVENTURES OF LOUISE OF COBURG

It was certainly a most romantic story. We have a very rich and very noble duke who is notorious for every sort of escapade; a still nobler consort who goes off with some little officer and squanders millions; a sensational lawsuit over forged bills of exchange; a forcible capture and confinement in a mad-house; a melodramatic flight, not with a rope-ladder and a white horse with padded hoofs, but with a snorting, flashing 120 H. P. that rushes the guilty couple right across modest, virtuous Germany; the wild storms of a raging husband and an old Emperor; a whole Court put to the rack and the pillory. Was there ever such material for the writers of novels and plays?

Many smart and ugly things have indeed been written round the whole affair. During their darker days, both Louise and Mattassich published various little books to proclaim their grievances to the



world. You may probably find them slumbering in some library under a shroud of dust. It is the business of dust, like that of grass in cemeteries, to cover up dead things.

But I am not going to relate the whole story of Louise over again. I want to mention only one chapter, which is undoubtedly the most important but which, for many reasons, has not received sufficient publicity. It deals with the part played by the Hapsburgs and the Court of Vienna in this romance and, as usual, that part is utterly lacking in sincerity and generosity. For the misfortunes of poor, eccentric Louise of Coburg were only one among the many effects of the great dynastic and political duel between the Houses of Austria and Belgium, about which I shall have something to say later on.

Some years ago I went to Koswig.

It is a little village in Saxony, smiling, clean and insignificant, like all other villages in Germany if we except those on the Rhine. There are square fields of green or brown or yellows, that might have been mapped out with a ruler; clumps of pines; as many mountains as you please, but in Germany the mountains are all absurd. However, I did not go

to Koswig to admire the mountains, but to see my brother Hadrian.

For Koswig has the honour of possessing the famous madhouse of the aristocracy, with the no less famous Aulic Doctor Pierson at its head, an institution that shelters all the noblest lunatics of Austria and Germany. My brother Hadrian has been shut up there for many years. He is not really mad, merely a man who has struggled for a righteous cause to the point of exhaustion. Lunatics, as you know very well, are usually brave and sincere folk. And courage and sincerity are dangerous qualities when you happen to have a rich, powerful uncle like Count Oliver de Rességuier, the man whom you will remember as the agent of the Viennese Court when the Emperor Maximilian was betrayed.

I am not now going to relate how and why my eldest brother came to be shut up at Koswig by his uncle, for it is merely a painful incident in a long family quarrel. You can make a shrewd guess when you remember how and why Princess Louise of Coburg was shut up in the same establishment.

Well, I was affectionately welcomed by Hadrian and looked at rather askance by Dr. Pierson, who

is never very happy when his patients receive visits. It is a friendly sort of place, something between an Alpine sanatorium and a gilded prison. There are dainty summer-houses, gay pergolas, fresh, fragrant shrubberies. No walls obtrude themselves anywhere, for it is one of Dr. Pierson's chief cares that his beloved guests shall never feel themselves imprisoned by aught save the trees and the skies.

I spent the afternoon on a terrace with my brother. We gazed in silence at an unnaturally green hill all sprinkled with villas, those dear German villas with their red or slate roofs, prim walls and clumps of pines, like cardboard toys with trees glued to wooden discs. Real lunatics were strolling about the garden, and we knew they were real lunatics because they were happier and more talkative than ourselves. Then from a cottage opposite came a woman like Juno, no longer very young but with a strong, handsome face and golden hair that glistened in the sunshine. I recognised Louise of Coburg at once, though she was a good deal changed. She had the air of one who feels very home-sick for freedom, has some grievance against mankind, searches the horizon in a hopeless effort to see some-



thing beyond the pergolas and pines. She greeted us with a nod.

Then I asked my brother about her and he told me how she had told him her troubles and confided her grievances against Dr. Pierson. When I went away in the evening, I thought a great deal about the poor Princess shut up in the gilded cage of Koswig by the intrigue of a Court. I understood her hatred for her persecutors and her love for the man who had sacrified all for her sake and now languished in a prison more terrible than hers. I wished she could be free, but that was not to be for years.

In case there remains somebody who does not know who Princess Louise was and why she started the big scandals which made three Courts boil over, I will give a short sketch of her career.

Louise Marie Amélie, born in February, 1858, is the eldest of the three daughters of Leopold II., the late King of the Belgians: Louise, Stéphanie and Clementine. Like Stéphanie (Rudolph's widow), Louise made an apparently excellent match. Although Philip Mary of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, whom she married on the 4th of February, 1875, was not a crowned head, he was one of the

richest and most influential Princes in Europe. As to riches, he surpassed most sovereigns. His qualities were varied. For instance, he became something very like the keeper of the consciences of Francis Joseph and Rudolph, and he was also the most assiduous companion of Rudolph's debauches.

The two sisters, Louise and Stéphanie, both betrayed with offensive frankness by their respective husbands and received rather than welcomed by an unfriendly Court at Vienna, suffered a long time together and then meditated revenge in very different forms. Stéphanie's revenge was tragic, Louise's almost comic, but each revenge cost the Belgian princesses much suffering.

Louise was not only betrayed but ill-treated by her husband. All the most innocent expressions of her strange, clever character were thwarted with puerile contempt. Her nature, however, was too proud to give way to feminine bickerings and she endured her misfortunes with great moral rectitude from the outset. She answered the infidelity of her spouse with a calm disdain, which she extended to the Hapsburg Court.

As we know, Philip of Coburg was found obscenely drunk after Rudolph's last orgy, and natur-

ally enough Louise soon heard all about it. This scandal, on the top of all that had gone before, proved the last drop which caused her cup to overflow. And her revenge did not tarry very long.

"No blood," she must have thought to herself. The old quick plan of using daggers and such things suits weak people who are in a great hurry because they are afraid of changing their minds. Moreover, it is an old-fashioned plan, in very bad taste.

Princess Louise had a very strong nature, both physical and mental; her stature was that of a strong tower and her will was correspondingly inflexible. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, says the wise old precept. Louise stored it well up in her mind and set to work to apply it with great diligence to her husband. She gave back offence for offence, infidelity for infidelity. I can assure you that Philip of Coburg did not find it amusing at all.

Thus was war declared between the princely pair.

And all the aristocratic tea-parties of Austria, Belgium and Germany rang with the mighty blows which the Juno-like combatant delivered with mas-

terly skill. It was an inexhaustible source of gossip.

But meanwhile Louise's position became more and more difficult, for a new and serious event had occurred, one of those events which pass unobserved by the public, which at best can only perceive their consequences. It occurred to the Court of Vienna (whose campaign against Stéphanie concluded victoriously when she became Countess Lónyay) that the two Belgian princesses would be far less formidable if they had very little money instead of some dozens of millions. And they would certainly have had those millions on the death of their father, Leopold II.

It was therefore wise to anticipate this danger, and the Court of Vienna is neither a babe nor a novice in such matters. The obvious plan was to fix a great gulf between Leopold II. and his daughters. The first effort was directed to poisoning Leopold's mind with calumnies, then, as this had no effect, he was attacked in the weak joint of his harness.

After all, there was nothing very strong about Leopold's devotion to the fair sex. There are so many sovereigns, even among the most magnificent,



who have only gone down to history because they loved many strange women. Are you going to reprove Leopold for his weakness when he did so many useful things for his country?

Well, the Court of Vienna began to explore this territory and soon found it very promising. By this I do not mean that Leopold had merely chosen odalisques more or less cleverly presented by more or less clever Austrian agents. No, because he had quite a personal taste of his own, more especially where the fair sex was concerned. But I can assure my readers that his last conquest, the best and truest of all, was none other than an instrument of Vienna. I allude to Baroness Vaughan.

And it is well known that this woman not only succeeded in depriving Stéphanie and Louise of the lion's share of their father's estate, but also induced Leopold to bury his hatred of Francis Joseph and Elisabeth and place himself as a blind instrument in the hands of the Coburgs and the Hapsburgs for the discomfiture of his own daughter Louise.

At last Louise brandished her big sabre and delivered her decisive stroke. Coburgs and Hapsburgs must have had many broken bones for a while.

She united herself in the loudest and most scan-

dalous way with de Mattassich-Keglevich, a Croatian officer, squandered huge sums to the detriment of her rich husband, and circulated bills of exchange that reached fabulous figures—say, six or seven millions of crowns. These bills of exchange bore the forged signatures of Stéphanie and Rudolph. The whole Teutonic world was filled with the incredible doings of Princess Louise. This was just what she wanted, but it was by no means all.

When the guarantors were questioned, they declared that they knew nothing about these signatures. The consequence was that all sorts of usurers gave way to paroxysms of savage cries in infernal chorus. Then the generous friends of the unhappy Louise started a lawsuit.

The scandal was enormous. It damaged the reputation not only of Louise but also of her multimillionaire husband and all the Imperial family. Louise was radiant with satisfied hate.

But the lawsuit afforded her another satisfaction that was perhaps still more pleasing to her woman's heart, which had some excuse for being sceptical about love. And that was to find in the man she had chosen as her lover, perhaps rather as an instrument of hate and vengeance than through any



infatuation, a generous and self-sacrificing friend. In face of the position in which the policy of Vienna had placed Louise, de Mattassich-Keglevich aroused universal stupefaction by making a solemn declaration that he and he alone had forged all the bills of exchange. The whole of Austria knew that this was only a splendid lie and that he had spent all his little fortune on the Princess. Nevertheless (to the everlasting shame of Austrian justice), judges were found who, in their ambition for advancement, condemned de Mattassich-Keglevich to seven years' imprisonment.

In those days a great many of this man's photographs passed through my hands. He looked interesting rather than handsome, but was a fine manly type before his imprisonment. After that he was so thin that it hurt one to see him. And I think many aristocratic ladies of Austria shed secret tears over his fate, moved by his noble sacrifice, and vainly sighed for a similar devotion on the part of their lovers.

Meanwhile Philip of Coburg was not resting on his laurels, for his chief enemy was not yet defeated, and one never knows. . . . He obtained a sort of interdict against his wife and spent large sums of

money in filling all the world's newspapers with paragraphs and warnings. He had deprived the enemy of one weapon, but it was necessary to his complete peace that she should be imprisoned.

Now we find Philip of Coburg engaged in mysterious conclaves with Francis Joseph and Leopold II., now obsequiously carrying out the wishes of Austria as expressed through her gentle and well-paid agent.

Meanwhile Princess Louise had been shadowed by detectives who followed her even into her bedroom in spite of every public protest, and one fine day, after a violent struggle, she was forcibly seized and packed off to Dr. Pierson's noble madhouse in Saxony. There she remained about seven years.

She was very unhappy all that time. With her proud, restless, active nature, she found the life at Koswig more than sad. The invisible walls among the trees represented not only the limitation of her liberty but also the triumph of her enemies. And when humiliated hate knocks against the sullen walls of a prison, it becomes a battering-ram that is rather painful to its owner. She had been accustomed, especially during recent years, to rush



from one capital to another; to find herself in one place only to have an instant desire to move on to the next; and it is easy to understand how the prim pergolas of the garden, the long green hill with its cardboard villas and the everlasting sameness of the sky became so intolerable that she could not bear to look at them. She spent nearly all her time shut up in her cottage. She could not even comfort herself by discovering visions of great flowery fields in the wall-paper of her prison, or of a tranquil blue lake in a pool of rain-water that mirrored the sky, or of a virgin forest in a bowl of roses. She had no imagination and could dream of nothing but liberty. Or else she beheld something that her eyes could not see, a man who had loved her faithfully and was now enduring prison for her sake.

Besides which, according to what my brother told me and what the Princess confirmed in a sort of biographical protest to the German public, she was treated rather badly by the Aulic Councillor Dr. Pierson.

I remember, among the many episodes related to me by my brother, that the doctor used to reprove the Princess for her habit of scratching her head, threatening to strike her with his hands if she did

not mend her ways,—and this in the presence of various witnesses. Whereupon the Princess would reply contemptuously, "Now you are not talking like a doctor but like a spy."

The only issue out of this hell was to escape, and the Princess must have turned many schemes over in her head. A certain encouragement was afforded by the release of Mattassich-Keglevich, who was indeed reduced to a walking skeleton by his seven years of severe imprisonment but who had by no means lost his love for her. This at least he informed her secretly.

So the new drama was prepared outside the invisible walls of the noble mad-house, and it succeeded perfectly.

Mattassich had a kind of friend at Vienna, who owned a prosperous, popular eating-house in the suburb of Floritzdorf, as well as an extra-powerful motor-car. This car was to be the first instrument of liberation.

Dr. Pierson had a sister-in-law who kept a kind of pension or small hotel at Bad Elster, a watering-place near Koswig on the borders of Bohemia. She was immensely fond of money and was clearly intended to figure as the second instrument. And

now the intelligent Louise was fully equipped.

In spite of the strictest orders from Vienna, she obtained leave from Dr. Pierson to make an excursion to Bad Elster, of course under good escort. The doctor was naturally glad that his dear sister-in-law should have an opportunity of making a bit of money out of the Princess.

Now all was plain sailing. Louise went to Bad Elster, and Mattassich arrived there almost at the same time on the powerful motor with a small band of friends. Dr. Pierson's sister-in-law and the Princess' vigilant escort perceived too late that a trap had been laid for them. They were either hoodwinked or overcome by force, and the happy pair, now at last reunited, contrived to reach France after a regular Odyssey and the use of every conceivable precaution. Here they were in safety.

The consequences of this flight were stupendous, as you may well imagine. Philip of Coburg and Francis Joseph had terrible outbursts of fury; the over-greedy Pierson kicked himself for not having been content with his very respectable profits as Louise's gaoler; Stéphanie and Leopold II. indulged in sardonic smiles; there was an unheard-of scandal throughout virtuous Germany, where the

satirical journals published caricatures without the most elementary respect for certain august persons. I remember two very impertinent broadsheets that were published at the time. One represented Leopold II., Philip of Coburg and Francis Joseph pushing the Princess into the mad-house with great violence, and Dr. Pierson standing at the door with his warders. In the other was the flight of the happy pair on the motor, pursued by the sister-in-law with an enormous sword girt to her gown.

The Princess was then declared by a council of the first alienists of France to be perfectly sound in mind and body, save for the traces of long and cruel ill-treatment.

Louise and Stéphanie eventually succeeded, but only partially and after many struggles, in securing something out of the inheritance of their father Leopold II.

And Philip of Coburg showed himself as great a blackguard at the end as he did all through this tragi-comedy, publishing all sorts of books and pamphlets, the last eddies of all this storm, which derives its chief interest from its connection with the complicated tragedy of the House of Hapsburg.

CHAPTER VI

ARCHDUKE FRANCIS FERDINAND AND HIS BROTHER OTHO

THE story of the succession to the throne of Austria is ugly enough and teaches many things, especially not to desire it. It would almost appear as though there were a curse attached to it. Before Charles Francis became heir, three others had to disappear in sufficiently evil ways,—Rudolph, Otho and Francis Ferdinand. We seem to recognise some such diabolical influence as made us open our mouths and eyes very wide when we were children.

We have already followed Rudolph's career, and that of Charles Francis is still only an undeveloped negative without any indications of the picture it will reveal. Let us then pause a moment to consider the careers of the brothers Francis Ferdinand and Otho, whom death cut off from the Austro-Hungarian throne.

Everybody knows about Francis Ferdinand's tragic end at Serajevo, his extreme devotion to re-



Photograph, Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.

ARCHDUKE FRANCIS FERDINAND AND HIS WIFE, THE COUNTESS SOPHIA CHOTEK



ligion, his anti-Italian sentiments, his love-romance. All one knows about Otho is that he led a wild life, died at an early age from a horrible disease, and left a son who is now heir to the throne.

And yet those two people were remarkable, especially when studied in the antagonisms of their lives, methods and ideas, for they published something very like a second edition of the conflict which raged between Francis Joseph and Maximilian. An edition, however, without a tragical conclusion, for they contrived to agree to lead their own lives in their own way.

I always took a lively interest in their antagonism for a variety of reasons, and I had opportunities of studying causes, evidence and consequences through my relationship and friendship with people who enabled me to follow the daily life of the two archdukes. Above all, I found a precious source of information in my old confessor and teacher, the Jesuit Father H—— A——, a famous preacher, a man of extraordinary intelligence and culture and breadth of views. He was the tutor of Francis Ferdinand, whose character was certainly formed by this most intelligent and uncompromising Jesuit.

As for Archduke Otho and the many strange ad-

ventures with which he occupied the gossips of Vienna, my information came from his faithful aide-de-camp, my friend and relative Count Adolphus Ledebur Wicheln, an officer and Court chamberlain. Adolphus (eldest son of the late Count Ledebur, Minister of Agriculture and Knight of the Golden Fleece) married my cousin Mitza de Rességuier, eldest daughter of the Count Oliver, whom I have mentioned in connexion with the sad end of Maximilian of Mexico. I also heard a good deal about the two Archdukes from one of my brothers, Maurice de Rességuier, who is still a secretary at the Imperial Court if I am not mistaken.

A fine tombstone and many wreaths. Archduke Rudolph had departed.

There were no other direct heirs. The throne would pass to the Emperor's brother Charles Louis. But Charles Louis was very ill and it was not long after the tragedy of Meyerling that he too passed away to an Empyrean even higher and nobler than that of the Austrian Empire, if indeed such a place can be conceived.

Then the curiosity of the world directed itself towards his two sons, Francis Ferdinand and Otho. But if the Pragmatic Sanction was quite clear on

the point that the succession appertained to Francis Ferdinand as the elder of the two it was equally clear that Francis Ferdinand had inherited consumption from his father and might not have the strength to don the very heavy crown of Austria and Hungary.

It was rumoured that he would renounce his rights in favour of his brother. And all those who strolled along the Kärntnerstrasse turned round to admire the handsome Archduke Otho, full of health and smiles and wine. He was to be seen in the big cafés talking very big with a crowd of merry officers or following some beauty with his eyes as she pursued her rhythmical way towards the alleys of the Prater at the fall of day. All watched him with sympathy. For Francis Ferdinand was known to be oppressed by his illness and his almost senile religiosity, while Otho had a violent temper, ran after women and made no secret of his vices. People always reserve their chief sympathies for naughty men.

But one day Francis Ferdinand returned from a long journey round the world completely cured and hastened to assert his rights to the succession, which could no longer remain in doubt. And Otho

soon buried his disappointment, if disappointment there was, in the perfumes of women and the fumes of wine. Then he died. And in 1914 Francis Ferdinand also departed on another tremendously long journey from which he was never to return.

Meanwhile, the old Emperor had foreseen the possibility of his third heir passing away before himself and in 1907 had the foresight to nominate a fourth in the person of Otho's son, Charles Francis, then twenty years of age. The last perhaps? That still remains to be recorded. But if the young all die and the old man alone remains, it seems to me that Francis Joseph may as well give up thinking about his successors.

Charles Louis of Hapsburg and Marie Annunziata of Bourbon had two sons, Francis Ferdinand born in 1863 and Otho born in 1865. There was thus little difference between their ages, though much between their natures.

Francis Ferdinand began his studies under the guidance of the Jesuit Father H—— A——, who wrote several books specially intended for the education of the young Archduke. It was by the influence of this Jesuit that he developed a semblance of submission while retaining an iron will that was



Photograph, Paul Thompson.

FRANCIS JOSEPH AT THE WEDDING OF CHARLES FRANCIS JOSEPH, THE NEW EMPEROR OF AUSTRIA



always directed towards one object, a strong tendency towards political intrigue, and an innate dislike for everything anti-Catholic. His belief was fervent and he observed all the externals of religion very scrupulously from his childhood. He always delighted in the soft shadows of chapels, where a ray of sunlight crept through Gothic windows, scarcely daring to beflower the walls, as though afraid to intrude upon the solemnity of the place. He loved the odour of incense and roses, for they recalled peaceful memories of his first communion or the perfumed functions of the month of Mary. And with the positive side of his religion there always remained a vague mysticism that drove him to seek the solitude of woods and night-time, that he might question them about the problems of life; he had a worship also for the realities of nature, which he had studied scientifically with great diligence, as was evidenced by the rich collections of plants and minerals which he brought back from his journeys.

We must not forget these early years if we want to understand Francis Ferdinand later on, for they were the foundation of his private and public life.

He continued his education in the great Jesuit

college of Kalksburg, where he was not popular because his strict ideas and religious fanaticism confined his character like an iron cage. He only began to attract serious attention when he inherited the rich patrimony of his uncle Francis V. of Modena.

His habits were in accordance with his views, and he always preferred an ecclesiastical function to good hunting or good company. The delicate health, which preceded his journey round the world, had left its traces on his looks and vigour.

"A consumptive with a face like a potato," was the verdict of old Prince Cari or Charles of Trauttmannsdorf, the keenest Nimrod in Austria, when he came to Nisko in October to slay seventeen stags a day from his carriage covered with leafy branches.

Otho was a very different sort of man, openly dictatorial, often quarrelsome, sometimes cruel too. The only use of his teachers of science and ethics was to provide butts for his wit. Not that he was ill-natured, but he had an innate craving for laughter and fun; for all the roses of life even though public opinion and Holy Church forbade them to be plucked. Most of his irreverence was probably due to the interminable ceremonies which he had to endure in his youth amid the shadows of Gothic

chapels when he longed to pick up his bruised knees from the pavement and run out into the fierce sunlight. Anyhow he repaid himself amply afterwards for the moral restraints of his youth.

He had all the strength and grace of a noble race, and women went mad over his well turned leg in its sheath of white leather so tightly laced that it seemed ready to burst; over his very white teeth and turned up moustachios, which made him look a regular Don Juan.

It was natural that, with such different minds, the Archdukes should also have different political ideals.

Francis Ferdinand was submissive to his spiritual advisers and the ultra-Catholic training of his tutors. He soon showed himself the uncompromising champion of a church policy. A nephew of Francis V. of Modena, a grandson of King Bomba of Naples, he was opposed to all the liberal ideas which have arisen from the ashes of the little Austrian monarchies in Italy. He would probably have revived the question of the Pope's temporal power if Fate had given him time to become Emperor. For the same reasons he was fiercely opposed to republican and anti-Catholic France as well as to

Orthodox Russia; less openly so to Protestant Prussia, the overlord of the Catholic States of Germany.

He was a Conservative with a modern veneer. He would have liked to consolidate his House on a broader but still ultra-Catholic base, maintaining and strengthening all the mediæval traditions, relying upon an enormous well-disciplined army, conceding only reforms and innovations of a commercial character. Thus he offered a splendid example of an ancient race adapting itself to new forms in order to keep the structure intact. His aspirations were essentially antagonistic to the spirit of modern times.

His brother represented the negation of all that; indeed we might call Otho the photographic negative of Francis Ferdinand. His political ideas were not very clear, for he had always preferred a discussion about the genuineness of Countess X's fair hair or the comparative merits of the best brands of champagne to all social or religious problems. But he contrived to display tendencies utterly opposed to those of his brother. Perhaps the differences were only on the surface, differences of paths that really lead to the same place. For both Arch-



Photograph, Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.

EMPEROR CHARLES FRANCIS JOSEPH AND EMPRESS ZITA OF AUSTRIA



dukes aimed at the same goal of absolutism. Both had it in their blood, the blood of the Hapsburgs.

The doubt about the succession to the throne made the two brothers appear to be competitors for a short time. There was a sort of bloodless conflict, unknown outside Austria but much talked about at Vienna and considered likely to have serious consequences. Francis Ferdinand was ill and gloomy. He invited no friendships or sympathies, and he must have been disconcerted to see his brother enjoying all the splendour of magnificent virility, the devotion of nobles and populace, all of whom went into fits of laughter over his most atrocious escapades and forgave him as readily as though he were still a schoolboy.

Nor did Otho spare his pious, taciturn brother the constant shafts of a sarcasm that was all the more offensive because it was expressed in public. He never missed an opportunity of deriding him whenever the physical or moral attributes of his brother gave him a chance. And when no chance offered itself, he went out of his way to find one. He took a childish delight in mimicking him, and often made him supremely ridiculous. Naughty,



merry Otho! It was lucky for him that his brother did not hold the reins of power.

The possibility of dangerous consequences did not deter him from deriding the Rev. Father H—— A—— and all Francis Ferdinand's venerable professors. He went ostentatiously to a house of ill fame while his brother was at Mass. There were also other adventures too shocking for me to relate. His most innocent sins were periodical bouts of drunkenness celebrated with a certain solemnity of ritual. And all this while Francis Ferdinand was recovering from his illness, haunting churches and, under the guidance of the best advisers, prosecuting with silent tenacity certain intrigues towards very definite ends.

It was natural that, after a succession of insults and worse than insults, the two Archdukes should presently agree to separate.

Francis Ferdinand selected the Belvidere for his abode. It is a magnificent castle, built for Prince Eugene of Savoy-Carignan. It overlooks Vienna and has shady avenues of sixteenth-century grandeur with thousands of fountains that animate it with their crystal murmurs.

Otho settled much further down in the Augarten

Palace, as far away as possible from the Belvidere. Even the style of the two dwellings was different, Otho's being decidedly French. And the gentlemen in attendance on the two brothers were either open or secret enemies.

Francis Ferdinand, always gloomy and silent, led a very serious life. Otho, lively and indiscreet, organised orgies in his castle. There was an inscription over the door: "A pleasure-house where all men are always welcomed by their friends." It is true that this had been put up by Joseph II. in 1775.

But the odd thing is that, in spite of all their differences, both had the same aims, both tended towards a despotism that was anything but edifying. While Otho was cruel to his soldiers and stripped his unfortunate attendants in order to tie them to hot stoves (I have spoken with Anthony Kohler, who was tortured in this way), Francis Ferdinand would prosecute one of his servants on the unproved charge of stealing a sixpenny chain, and the magistrate who acquitted the man would be removed immediately from his post.

Both tried to secure the support of the military party and were regarded by the Emperor with

great suspicion on that account; indeed, he tried to protect himself by fomenting the discords between them.

For now that his son was dead and there was no hope of a direct heir, Francis Joseph thought of only one thing—to reign as long as possible.

In 1886, when he was only twenty-one, Archduke Otho married Princess Marie Josephine of Saxony, who was even younger than himself. But this did not check him in his tempestuous career. It was not his fault, poor fellow. It was that of his confounded character, which always inspired him with a mad craving for mischief and made him give way to every caprice that came into his head.

He was fond of champagne but did not despise other wines. He drank them all in bucketfuls with the deliberate intention of making himself drunk.

This naturally led to a certain amount of unpleasantness. For instance, when he was at the Hotel Sacher with a joyous crowd of lively damsels and noisy officers, he wandered by mistake into a room which belonged to the British Ambassador and his wife. This would not have mattered much in ordinary circumstances. Excuses and a hurried exit would have sufficed. But the unfor-



Photograph, Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.

ARCHDUCHESS MARIA-JOSEPHA



tunate fact was that the Archduke was stark naked save for a cap on his head and a sword at his side. One can imagine that the Ambassadress was not particularly pleased.

He was a good soldier and an excellent horseman, he could handle a sword like one of Dumas' musketeers, and he was so proud of his equestrian skill that, one day when he met the funeral of a worthy burgher on its way to the central cemetery, he put his horse at a gallop and leaped over the coffin calmly continuing his ride after negotiating the obstacle. And oddly enough the mourners did not seem to appreciate the cleverness of the feat.

He would never endure that any one should hold opinions different from his own. Once he gave a terrible beating in the streets to an honourable member of Parliament who had dared to criticise his jovial way of living.

Among the many drunken outbursts of handsome Otho there was one which caused him serious troubles. I believe that even he had reason to regret it.

One night at his Castle of Augarten he held high revelry with his adjutants and other boon companions. The champagne had flowed in torrents and



if the Archduke was roaring drunk, the legs of his courtiers were not very steady either. The usual discussion turned to feminine charms when they are not concealed by inconvenient veils. And all of a sudden the Archduke, staggering to his feet, invited the whole party to accompany him to the bridal chamber, where his poor wife, Marie Josephine, was in bed, perhaps making bitter reflections over the infidelities and escapades of her merry husband.

When they were all in the room, the Archduke shouted, "Now you shall see how beautiful my wife is."

Then he tore off the bed-clothes and his unfortunate wife had to take refuge under the bed. One of those present has related how the Archduchess' Master of Ceremonies, who, like herself, was a Saxon, sought, at the risk of his life, to save his mistress from this humiliation and then ran off at once to telephone to the Emperor.

Francis Joseph had the blackguard brought to the Hofburg that very night, made him go down on his knees and gave him a sound flogging.

But the disgraceful incident had still more serious consequences at the Court of Saxony, for all

the reigning families of Austria and Germany are like so many diapasons which all sound if you touch one. At Dresden the affair aroused the most violent resentment against the Hapsburgs in general. It was necessary to find some way of avenging this serious offence to a Saxon princess. And more than one person was ready to take up the cudgels. Especially one of Marie Josephine's relations, Princess Mathilda of Saxony, the King's sister, who found a scape-goat in Princess Louise of Hapsburg-Tuscany, now Mrs. Toselli.

There is no need to enlarge upon the love-affair which suddenly transformed the private life and public prospects of the other Archduke, for the whole world knows all about it, especially since the tragedy of Sarajevo.

When he came back, completely cured, from his journey round the world, received the big legacy of Francis V. and was recognised as the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Francis Ferdinand became an excellent match. This fact occurred to his aunt Isabella, wife of the Archduke Ferdinand, who had six unmarried daughters. So he invited Francis Ferdinand, then about thirty-eight years of age, to the Castle of Pressburg ostensibly to enjoy the

shade of magnificent avenues all full of memories of Maria Theresa, really to make the acquaintance of the eldest of his marriageable cousins, Maria Christina, then eighteen. The match would have pleased everybody. Francis Ferdinand arrived and stayed on for some time, to the great joy of his aunt. But one fine day an observant Jesuit tutor shattered all her sweet illusions. The Archduke Francis Ferdinand was only staying on because, after a series of conversations in the shady avenues of the castle, he had fallen in love with one of the Archduchess Isabella's maids of honour, the young and beautiful Countess Sophia Chotek. Some malicious person was even unjust enough to say that he had not stopped at falling in love with her. Aunt Isabella was furious and packed the imprudent young lady off at once. After seeking refuge with a sister, who received her almost like a criminal, she retired to a convent at Prague.

But the wise counsellors of Archduke Francis Ferdinand were not caught napping. They reflected that, if they induced the future Emperor to marry the Countess Chotek, who was an intelligent and pious woman, they would not only have performed a good action but also acquired, through



Photograph, Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.

ARCHDUKE FRANCIS FERDINAND AND HIS FAMILY



her, a new ascendancy over the Archduke's mind and consolidated their influence over the affairs of the Dual Monarchy.

Francis Ferdinand was not difficult to persuade. A far tougher nut to crack was Francis Joseph, who was always ready to close an eye to illicit loves but was quite uncompromising about marriages that did not conform to all the rules of custom and etiquette. Now Sophia Chotek was the daughter of Count Chotek of Chotkowa and Wognin and Countess Minzie Kinsky, consequently of ancient, impoverished Bohemian nobility but not of the blood royal, so she could not share the throne.

But clerical influences, which had so far carried most matters to a successful issue, contrived to win this battle also, and Francis Joseph consented to a morganatic marriage. This was celebrated on the 1st of July, 1900, in Bohemia. Previously, however, Francis Ferdinand had to sign a deed of renunciation to the Crown on behalf of his wife and children.

Soon afterwards, the Archduke's wife was created Princess of Hohenberg by the Emperor, and later on Duchess, which in Austria is a much higher title.

This wedding had considerable influence on the Archduke, who, with his intelligent wife, placed himself at the head of a party of irreconcilables who would have liked to see Austria return to the times of Metternich. One of the chief objects they had in view was to transform Austria into a great Slav and Catholic power that would act as a barrier to Orthodox Russia.

Otho was the first of the two Archdukes to die.

He went off to travel in the East, perhaps at the suggestion of the Emperor, who was growing tired of his disorderly behaviour. After staying a long time at Cairo, he came back with a horrible disease. But he did not acknowledge himself beaten. He went on drinking generous wines and courting fresh women and carousing with his friends in the Kärntnerstrasse. Now, however, there were interludes between his pleasures, for he had to submit to operations from time to time. The last and most painful was that of tracheotomy. After that he died, leaving some children and a widow who was not inconsolable. That was in 1906.

For his brother the tragic fate of the Hapsburgs

waited a few years longer. Then it descended upon him in 1914.

And so the two young, vigorous Archdukes passed away and the old Emperor lived to bury them.

They were both highly intelligent, they had artistic sentiments, originality, presence of mind. In the very differences of character, which caused antagonisms between them, there was a common basis of tenacity and hardness. In their natures were collected all the traditions, all the sentiments, all the physical and moral qualities of the Imperial race. They were two thorough Hapsburgs.

But that race is a mad and sanguinary anachronism.

It was therefore fated that they should disappear.

CHAPTER VII

INTERMEZZO: WILLIAM I. AND HIS UNSUSPECTED LOVE

With your permission we will now travel some little way back. During the survey of my memories, I espied a cross-road which dawdles through the fields of sabbatical laziness and will presently bring us back to our starting-point. But you will notice afterwards that the main road has become more easy.

It was in those days when women hid themselves in crinolines, like clappers inside bells, and men buried their heads in romantic collars so as to look like cocks advancing to the conquest of a farmyard. I must take an oil-lamp to illuminate that period, for I am now going back to my grandmother's reminiscences. Quite ancient history.

I am going to tell you about William I. and take you to a Prussian plain where you can almost smell Russia; to a watering place where the Alps stretch their chilly feet towards the Danube.

Yes, you say, but what has this to do with Francis Joseph?

Well, in the first place, you know that memory is the most treacherous of guides, always delighting to lead you all over the place like one who does not remember where you want to go.

Then, Francis Joseph, with the face of an Œdipus continually presented by Fate, makes you too melancholy if you have him always by your side, and you will breathe all the better in the presence of a man who made his own fate.

Thirdly, enemies count more than friends when you want to know the lives of monarchs. Now it was William I., the simple king of an upstart kingdom, who stood up one fine day to the Emperor of the oldest and most powerful Empire, and frowned after the manner of a country gentleman who has a bit of money and some sturdy fists. "Get out of this," he said, "I am the boss here." And when the great man would not believe his ears the other broke into his house and filled him with the devil's own fear. That was the fellow who counted most in the political life of Francis Joseph.

But I am not concerned here with William's career as a conqueror. The history-books tell us all



about that. I am going to make a few extracts out of his private life as my grandmother remembers it, with additional details supplied by my mother and myself.

William I. You see at once a massive figure hewn out of granite or bronze or any other hard substance, all Teutonic roughness, with a half royal, half filibuster frown, with his hands pressing on the big sword of a mediæval hero, spreading his legs wide apart and roaring in stentorian tones, "No thoroughfare here!"

But now I want you to behold him without crown or frown, with the soft eyes of a boyish prince begging for a woman's smile. I want you to look through the keyhole and see him in his underclothes. That is the only revenge available for little people like ourselves against great granite conquerors.

A century ago! Everything seems very far away and very sleepy when we look back from these strenuous times with people dying everywhere all round us. The Russian snows of Buonaparte's retreat seem to us all pink and white and the cannons of the Grand Army were toys for children and the soldiers of those days nice kind gentlemen who waged war with chivalrous condescension. All



much further away than a mere century now that a single year fills so many chapters of history.

William, son of King Frederick William III. of Prussia and Queen Louise, had to spend three years of hard exile at Königsberg, watching the French ships cruising about in the marshy recesses of the Baltic and straining his ears to hear the tramp of French soldiers in the squares of Berlin.

He hated the French. He was only a boy, born in 1797, but France had robbed his father of a kingdom and his mother had been outrageously insulted—his mother, the lovely Louise, whose sweet, dignified eyes had not been able to soften the brutality of Buonaparte. William could not put aside a hatred that was bred in his bones, and the hatred was still there when his opportunity came in 1870. On the other hand he had a feeling of friendliness towards Russia. For political necessity, as well as a strange affinity of blood that, deny it who may, does persist between Russians and Prussians, directed his sympathies towards the great plains where the sun rises. It may also have been a question of habit. For all those things which filled our youth with friendly associations seem to penetrate right into our minds and give us unconscious



impulses when we meet them again. They are like our first love, which is still capable of inflaming our cheeks after many years. The Hohenzollern castles, in which he spent his childhood, all have an exotic air, and their strangeness is all Russian. Their halls have dark Siberian beams; the cornices of the great stoves are of malachite, the precious marble of the Urals. And the light that trickles in from outside finds little to enliven with its gaiety, for all the ornaments are of Russian bronze, which is almost black, or of *tula,* which is of nickel silver, that is, black and white. And on all hands there are embroideries in Russian colours and *kakochnik* or Russian diadems and jewels of Slavo-Byzantine work,—so that if the Russians take some of the castles in Eastern Prussia they will find themselves almost at home. I remember, in an Imperial castle lost among the canals and pines of the Spreewald, there was a Christ in burnished silver with great big almond eyes made out of blue jewels, seas of sweetness in which one might drown oneself when the soul is sad.

But if young William felt the influence of such surroundings, it was without dreaming over them, for he was by no means a dreamer. He was a fine

little fellow with a practical, healthy mind that was quite a stranger to lyrical flights, and most of his thoughts were concentrated on the number and discipline of soldiers. His abilities were mainly scientific, mathematical and military. The life he passed with his elder brother was simple and almost middle-class. His fond mother wrote thus about him to her husband in 1808 with happy pride: "Our son William, if I mistake not, will be simple, loyal and full of good sense like his father."

The good and lovely Louise was not far wrong in her anticipations. The only thing against him in later life was a certain innocent pleasure in visiting other people's property at the head of his armies, and this the lovers of peace and justice have found it difficult to forgive him. But who would have dreamed of such a career in those distant days? He was a slim, sickly-looking youth, a younger son with no likely prospect of the throne.

At an age when his contemporaries fought with popguns and wooden swords, young Prince William was waging real war against Buonaparte. But neither his noble martial exercises nor the joy of witnessing the Corsican ogre's fall served to restore his delicate health. It was decided that he should

go, like any other mortal, and take a cure at some watering-place.

So here we find him at Franzensbad for several consecutive summers.

It was a fairly well-known health resort even at that time, and it seems to have specialised in the cure of people who possessed high titles of nobility or considerable fortunes. Crowned heads and princes of the blood foregathered there. William was lodged every year in a small palace, well furnished according to the taste of the period. It was then shared by Princess Fürstemberg and my grandmother Countess Attala Strachwitz, who was then comparatively young.

You may imagine that it was considered a great honour for those two noble ladies to entertain the future Emperor William I., the "colossal" author of the "colossal" greatness of Germany. But no one had any idea of what was being hatched in the mind of this commonplace Prince, whose shyness was painful to see. My grandmother and Princess Fürstemberg scarcely took the faintest notice of His Royal Highness; indeed the Princess treated him with indifference almost bordering on contempt. For you are to remember that Princess

Fürstemberg, like my grandmother, was an Austrian, and according to Austrian tradition they regarded young William of Hohenzollern as the descendant of a little highland family of margraves who had rebelled in comparatively recent times against the divine and human rights of the glorious Empress Maria Theresa. And Maria Theresa had dismissed that vain pretentious person, Frederick the Great, with a contemptuous smile and a sneer about "that little Marquise of Brandenburg."

Moreover, the young Prince was by no means engaging. In spite of his shyness, he wanted to make advances to all the splendid young ladies who rivalled and even surpassed the flowers of the gardens of Franzensbad. And he was absurdly awkward in his courtships. Besides which, he had the rather disagreeable habit of taking too much to drink, and this often rendered him incapable of taking part in the various pastimes of the period.

All this accounts for his being neglected. And I should not be surprised if the haughty attitude of the Austrian aristocracy had not something to do with his attitude towards Austria in 1866. You will remember that, after Sadowa, Bismarck had to use all his great influence to prevent the revenge-

ful William from appropriating a slice of that blessed Empire. Perhaps, however, William II. is now preparing to retrieve his grandfather's lost opportunities when the future of his dear ally comes up for consideration.

So Prince William found himself at Franzensbad in an atmosphere of superficial deference and latent hostility.

Princess Fürstemberg was particularly disagreeable. She was a mediatised princess in rather poor circumstances and she did not lay the blame on the real culprit, Buonaparte, but upon Prussia for not having stopped him.

She was full of gall towards the young Prince and neglected no opportunity of making him feel her resentments. And William's strange habits afforded her plenty of opportunities.

The mischievous young people of Franzensbad took a special interest in the famous tight breeches of white doeskin which the Prince of Prussia delighted to display. There was a rumour (perhaps started by Princess Fürstemberg) that he used to wet them before he put them on so that they clung to his legs when they had been dried by the heat of his body. And a still more complicated opera-

tion was required to put them on. At least four servants had to be called in to help. Two of them held the breeches out at full stretch, and two more guided his half-naked Highness into the terrible sheath, pushing and pressing him and making him slide in with gentle insistence.

It was this operation which Princess Fürstemberg utilised for the gratification of her perverse inclinations, laying two snares really unworthy of a noble lady like herself.

In the first place, as the Prince had only brought two servants with him, he was obliged to ask for the help of two others when he wanted to put on his unspeakable breeches for a grand occasion. The Princess agreed to lend two of her servants, but at the most inopportune moment her old factotum, Anthony Kerpic, would come in and call them off. They left the Prince at once, for those were their secret orders. The consequences were terrible and inevitable. Sometimes the breeches burst and the Prince was sent sprawling on the floor, and he often missed some tender appointment.

The other trick outran all the limits of decency and my grandmother, who was perhaps an accom-



plice, took a huge delight in relating it. For my part I can scarcely think of it without blushing. For one day a band of noble damsels, led by the very impertinent Princess of Rohan, secretly attended one of these scenes. Not, mind you, to remain like mice behind the screen, but to run away with shouts of laughter after having bombarded the young Prince with big apples stolen from my grandmother's garden. And the worst of it was that at that moment William had not yet succeeded in putting on his white breeches. Fancy if his soldiers could have seen him in that predicament when they were dying for him under the walls of Paris!

But old Anthony Kerpic, who was deeply devoted to his mistress, proved a regular mine of petty spitefulness during His Royal Highness's visits to Franzensbad. He succeeded, for instance, in keeping the Prince out of the house half the night more than once when His Royal Highness had gone to a private ball and forgotten to take his key. It was perhaps lucky that William only ascended the throne many years later, when Kerpic was already dead. He would certainly have remembered all the disrespect of the old servant.

All the same, the Prince was fairly friendly on

the whole. During the days before the ruin of my family, I often had in my hands some of the presents which the Prince gave to my grandmother. One of these was a beautifully carved cedar-wood box lined with ebony, with a golden key, and it contained a dozen pairs of white Suède gloves with the regulation seventeen buttons, and another, a beautiful big fan of ebony and black satin, on which a clever artist had painted white roses.

William was a man who always subordinated everything to reasons of State, even his heart. He had cherished a real passion for Princess Eliza Radzwill, but in order not to trouble plans for the succession of the dynasty, he married Princess Augusta of Saxe-Weimar in 1829.

This Princess, afterwards Queen and finally Empress, was married for political reasons and occupied a very small place in the heart of her husband. He always treated her with great deference, but soon directed his amorous expansions towards other women.

And the Empress Augusta was terribly jealous. She wearied him continuously with recriminations and only succeeded in drowning her conjugal griefs in a course of naughty French novels. Her

attitude embittered William and he used to tell his confidants, Count Perponcher and old von Seekendorf, for instance, that he would have preferred a plot against his life to the jealousy of his wife. The plot against his life came all in due time when he was old. But his wife never ceased to be jealous.

Here is an instance. One of Augusta's ladies-in-waiting, Countess Huberta of Strachwitz, was a sister of my mother. She was not beautiful but had a splendid head of copper-coloured hair. Augusta was very jealous of her, no one knows why. One day William kissed the Countess's hand as usual, but seems to have kissed it rather too far up, where the Suède glove finished and my aunt's skin began. This trifling incident happened to be noticed by a malicious lady, Frau von Weiling, who hastened to report it to Augusta. Great wrath ensued, and my aunt, who may or may not have been a bad lot, had to retire to the Castle of Kamminietz in Prussian Silesia, and thence to Leopoli as Abbess of the Convent of the Sacred Heart. She was still there in 1914 when Leopoli was taken by the Russians.

And Augusta sometimes interfered in politics, causing infinite trouble to the Government. For

that reason Bismarck hated her. Before discussing State affairs with the Sovereign, he would often give way to vehement anger and make bitter complaints against the interference of Augusta. William used to listen to all the Chancellor's imprecations against Her Majesty and then open the real conversation every time with the same words:

"My dear Bismarck, let us assume that you have not said a single word of what has just passed your lips. Let us further assume that I have not heard a single word of what you intended me to hear. Now we will talk politics."

I had this from the wife of Puttkamer, Bismarck's cousin, sometime Minister of Public Worship in Prussia.

It was very wrong of the Empress Augusta to mix herself up with politics. As for her jealous furies, she had some small excuse. I have myself had an opportunity of verifying one of the worst of William's conjugal infidelities. It never became notorious, though it possessed an extraordinary interest at the time. Anyhow, there was no tragedy attached to it.

In the years 1890 and 1891, that is after the financial ruin of my unfortunate family, I went with



my mother and my brother Bernard (the youngest, now in Australia) to Baden-Baden, one of the most aristocratic watering-places in Europe. We were boarders in the house of Frau Faber-Augsberger, who owned many other boarding-houses in various parts of Baden-Baden. Now, gentle readers, this Mrs. Faber happened to be a natural daughter of William I. and of . . . Joan of Arc. I will tell you how.

His brother Frederick William IV., who ascended the throne of Prussia in 1840, had no children, so William was heir presumptive to the throne. He busied himself a good deal with politics, and still more with military matters. But that did not prevent him from indulging in occasional exercises of the heart, which, with a wife like Augusta, would otherwise have degenerated into a hard, cold bit of gristle. During one of his visits to the Theatre Royal at Berlin, he chanced to admire Frau Augsberger, a beautiful actress, who was chiefly celebrated for her rendering of the part of Joan of Arc, or as German Kultur translates her, the *Jungfrau von Orléans.*

The actress wore a wonderful suit of black armour and was moreover as tall and strong as a

royal grenadier, consequently in full accord with the heavy, massive taste of the period. And William did more than admire. He fell in love. Joan of Arc, a French heroine, seemed fair game for Teutonic strength, a fortress still more worth attacking than those which he took in 1870. So he loved the actress and they had a child,—the daughter of Joan of Arc.

So far, so commonplace. And as Frau Augsberger was very proud and earned a great deal by her art, she refused all offers of help from the Court of Berlin. She retired from the stage, lived peacefully and honestly for a long time with her child, then became very ill and died.

The little Augsberger was left without a mother and without means. Or if there were any means, they were all absorbed by a sort of distant cousin who passed as her guardian and does not seem to have been disinterested. He recognised her talent and her inherited tendencies for the stage and arranged for her to follow her mother's career. At that time she knew nothing of her left-handed royal origin.

She was handsome and soon went far. Then a strange thing happened.

She was playing at one of the great Berlin theatres, when William I., King of Prussia, chanced to attend a performance one evening. He was now well past sixty, but as tough and strong as any of the bronze or marble monuments which have since been raised in his honour throughout the public squares of Germany.

Between the cares of a war with Denmark and another with Austria, he had come to seek a little relaxation at a theatre. He noticed the young actress. Her face was familiar; it seemed a face he had known long ago, but a face that had not changed, while he had grown considerably older. Like many things we see after many years, it made him feel sad, for it seemed to say, "You go on your way and I remain always the same." His memory supplied the girl with a helmet, a sword and a black shield. There in front of him stood the ghost of his incomparable *Jungfrau von Orléans.*

So it came to pass that one horrid evening, a young actress and an old Sovereign sat eating and drinking together in a private room. It was a hot July, the perfume of the Thiergarten trees came in at the open windows, and the air seemed laden



Photograph, Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.

WILLIAM I., KING OF PRUSSIA





with kisses. The confidences became more intimate and the old Sovereign delved into the recesses of his memory. He told her how she reminded him of an actress called Augsberger whom he had known long ago when she played Joan of Arc. To cut a long story short, the old Sovereign and the young actress discovered they were father and daughter. It was perhaps lucky that the discovery occurred in time.

Some years later she married a man called Faber, who soon ate up the handsome dowry which had descended upon her from heaven or rather from the royal Castle of Berlin; which is much the same thing. Then he ate up, one by one, the very substantial subsidies which arrived periodically from the capital. But he died at last, perhaps of indigestion after having eaten so much. Very little money was now left; no more came down from heaven, for the deity who used to send it was dead and his ministers had no intention of continuing to pay.

So the widow Faber, daughter of an Emperor and Joan of Arc, became a boarding-house keeper and let villas.

During the years 1890 and 1891, when I was at

Baden-Baden with my mother and brother, I had in my hands a big packet of letters personally written by Prince Bismarck, Chancellor of the German Empire, to Mrs. Faber.

The letters, at least fifty of them, covering a period of about fifteen years, all resolved themselves more or less into three arguments: (1) that Mrs. Faber must on no account come to Berlin to ask for more money, but must wait for it at Baden; (2) that she must not spend on "that wretched Bavarian, Faber" all the money sent from Berlin, £2,000 a year, the annuity of a dowager duchess; (3) that she must be satisfied with the sum assigned to her because she would not receive a *pfennig* more.

With Mrs. Faber, as with everybody else, the great Bismarck was very rude. And from the correspondence we can deduce many things: that the daughter of Joan of Arc, after the revelation of her birth, had known how to derive the utmost profit out of it; that Mrs. Faber, like the Empress Augusta, waged war against the iron Chancellor and, wonder of wonders, more successfully than the French in 1870; that, from time to time, armed as she was with a possible scandal, she threatened to

march on Berlin and invest the capital; that, in spite of Bismarck's injunctions, she continued to spend money on the "miserable Bavarian," her husband; and, in fine, that she was never content with the money she received.

And in spite of the granite hardness of the Chancellor, he had to confess himself beaten more than once by gentle Mrs. Faber. I remember at least two letters, in which the Chancellor found time, between an international treaty and a treaty of peace, to ask the ex-actress for a receipt for fairly big sums that had been sent her from Berlin in addition to her appanage.

The letters were on large sheets of white paper, covered with Bismarck's huge handwriting, the handwriting of a conqueror. The last letters were after William I.'s death, when Bismarck had lost much of his influence or else thought it unnecessary to use it on behalf of Mrs. Faber.

The which explains why the unhappy lady was reduced to letting lodgings and why she opened her sad heart to sympathetic lodgers.

CHAPTER VIII

THE THREE AUSTRO-BELGIAN PRINCESSES: CHARLOTTE, STEPHANIE, LOUISE

Bella gerant alii; tu, felix Austria, nube: Nam quae Mars aliis, dat tibi regna Venus.

To-day perhaps the Court poet of the fifteenth century would not have had the courage to compose such a distych. So much irony seems to be hidden away therein. But perhaps you don't understand Latin? So much the better. If you make a wild guess at the meaning, you are much more likely to get at the truth. So I am not going to give you a translation.

The bridal chambers are very handsome at the Hofburg. And though the beds are draped in damask and velvet, and have baldaquins and crowns, they lose themselves in all the magnificence. As bedrooms they are much too big. But what does that matter to royal Princesses and imperial Archdukes for a single night? Walls near or walls

far away, a plastered ceiling or a starlit sky—all seems well on love's first night. Perhaps not to the men of a virtuous and Catholic House like that of the Hapsburgs. But the baby princesses who come from afar off, still sad with memories of some remote castle, trembling on the threshold of a new life: no room can be too big for their great nuptial dreams.

Afterwards, the sad days come. So the Imperial Castle of Vienna lies in wait for its brides. When I pass through the rooms, I see the velvet bed, the stucco ceiling, the cold, severe walls. And in a corner there is a little heap of ashes, all that remains of the dreams of the princesses. Poor princesses! What did anything matter in their happy hours? Still less matters in their hours of woe. They thought through their sleepless nights (these Charlottes and Stéphanies and Louises and Elisabeths and all the rest of them) that they were filling the rooms with the drama of their lives. But the rooms of the Hofburg, after restraining the hearts of its brides with hands of gold and marble, after seeing them die or depart, are still empty and cold.

Only one of them saved her dream of love, saved it through death and madness: Charlotte.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HAPSBURGS IN THE DRAMA OF THE THREE PRINCESSES

Three princesses of the same family left the busy plains of Belgium, came under the shadow of that dark sky where the two-headed eagle flaps its wings, and all found unhappiness. Charlotte, the sister of Leopold II. and his two eldest daughters, Louise and Stéphanie.

I have already told you about them. You have followed the course of their three dramas: one in the tragic solitude of death and madness, another in a comedy that is full of tears, then that of Stéphanie and the catastrophe of Meyerling. And all the three heroines survived their tragedies. That is why the dramas of real life are so much sadder than those on the stage. There at least the curtain falls, the mummers change their clothes and go out to eat and drink, and you can possess your souls in peace. In real life, however, the curtain falls and the public thinks no more about it, but there always remains somebody to suffer. I will tell you what happened afterwards to the three Austro-Belgian princesses. But my main object is that, when you compare their painful lives, you should realise the

responsibility of the House of Hapsburg in their misfortunes. That is only just, for the Hapsburgs have tried to lay the blame upon them when their only fault was that they did not know in time how to protect themselves. Some gentle politicians imagine that they can suppress a man for reasons of State. But it is always infamous to torment women who have come to you in ignorance, perhaps even in love.

You say that Charlotte went mad through grief over the death of her husband, and that her grief was all the greater because he was her only love. But those who know the uncompromising spirit and cruel pride of the Austrian aristocracy, only those who know the whole extent of the persecution directed by the Emperor and his partisans against those who remained faithful to his brother, can understand how the madness of the Empress Charlotte had other causes besides the terrible Mexican adventure. It was the last desperate effort of nature to save a body and soul from destruction.

The blows had been dealt her incessantly, continuously, of a set purpose. And madness is the best medicine for grief.

Louise and Stéphanie were two women neither

better nor worse than many others, just as good or bad as life made them. They found their hearts' sickness in matrimony. The blame for their mistakes belongs to the imperial and royal Archdukes, their husbands. And their new family never showed them a spark of affection or pity. The gilded doors of their apartments were open at the Hofburg, but between them and their nearest relations the doors were always closed. There were financial intrigues, too, and insidious calumnies. They rebelled, it is true, but their hearts were destroyed.

I admit that their father had his share in their misfortune. But if he was indifferent to their woes and even pushed them down the sad slope, it was largely through excess of sentiment. Let me explain. He had a tender love for all women who did not happen to be his daughters; he was ever ready to hearken to their prayers. And in a case of two against a hundred, it is the hundred who win. Moreover, it was the Court of Vienna which had known how to direct the affairs of the heart of the most gallant King of the Belgians. Surely, kings are not to blame when their affairs of the heart are also affairs of State.

CHARLOTTE AND THE CAR OF HAPPINESS

Princess Charlotte of Belgium in 1857 was like a face that has faded away in a very old photograph when you chance to open the family album. Such faces, when you look at them with half-closed eyes, afford strange, sad desires, a home-sickness for times in which you could not live because you were not yet born.

Charlotte still lives, but I cannot really believe that she can be yet alive, for the death of her mind has taken her very far away from us. I seem to hear some one reading verses out of some romantic ballad about a girl of fifty years ago, seated at a window and mourning over the departing day—the sort of things that made our grandparents weep. Poor Princess Charlotte!

She was born in 1840 and was married one July day when she was seventeen, a virgin even in her thoughts and dreams. And her Maximilian was indeed the ideal fair Prince.

There were high festivals at Brussels. The dancing and singing and feasting lasted for three whole days, as in a fairy-tale at the marriage of a king's daughter. At night there were Venetian illumina-

tions on the Canal of Willebroeck. When I was a boy, I used to stand in front of Charlotte's big portrait in one of the rooms of our palace. Then I recalled her story and her madness, but more particularly those Venetian illuminations which a great Belgian lady, one of my mother's friends used to describe to me to keep me quiet. "It was a hot July night. The air was damp and heavy with the scent of hay. The whole canal seemed on fire, such was the throng of boats all blazing with magic lights; and they went slowly, slowly down the stream, bearing with them the joyous cries of merry-makers and the blare of military bands. At the end of the procession, greatest and brightest of all, was a boat called the Car of Happiness: 'Happiness' was inscribed aloft, among wreaths of roses and orchids, above the portraits of the bride and bridegroom, Maximilian and Charlotte. The car seemed to put the night to flight with its big blaze. At last it passed away and on the waters of the canal there remained nothing but darkness and the sadness of distant drums. The happiness of the happy pair had passed away so far as that day was concerned. Things happened like that in life, too, my boy."

The old lady with her story of the Car of Happiness, my mother with her account of Maximilian's death, Charlotte's sad Odyssey among the Courts of Europe before he died, the first years of her madness,—all these have filled my heart with sorrow.

THE SAD STORY OF A DOLL

Charlotte was twenty-seven when she went mad. Her brother, Leopold II., shut her up in the Castle of Tervueren, a fairly cheerful place in fine weather when the birds sing, but gloomy enough when you hear the snow fall, flake on flake, in the silence of winter. One of her servants has described the life of the ex-Empress during the madness, which served her as a depository wherein to hide her one great love. She used to pass her nights at a window, with her still beautiful eyes staring out into the darkness, talking and laughing and weeping over things that she alone could see. During the daytime she remained in her big, strange room, where you could make out the oddest collection of things among the shadows. A bridal dress was hung on the wall beneath a feathered Mexican idol

and a bunch of old flowers and various weapons. In a corner was a life-sized doll representing a man in imperial robes, with the fair face of a child and blue eyes and a flowing blond beard—her dead husband, Maximilian. She used to spend her days talking dreamily to the doll, as though it were alive, transporting herself far away from the stern realities, as only lunatics and poets can. Then one evening as the shadows deepened and she still had words of love to say, she carried the doll to the window. It was growing too dark, so she brought a candle near. The heavy curtains caught fire and she was carried from the room in flames with her doll in her arms, severely burned. That at least is the story and we know that there was a fire at the Castle of Tervueren in 1874.

Thence Charlotte went to live at the Castle of Bouchout. A wall of thick trees and her madness separate her from the world, which has remained for her as it was before 1870, and she still dreams of love though she is now more than 75. I wonder what her thoughts were in that terrible August of 1914, when her solitude was disturbed by German guns and the iron tramp of troops.

The Court of Vienna viewed the Empress Char-

lotte's madness with no regrets, for it had many grievances against her. It objected to her as a Princess of Belgium, for Belgium was regarded almost as a rebel province that had separated itself from the sacred crown of the Hapsburgs. And, directly or indirectly, she had favoured the Liberal tendencies of her husband. So for him death and for her madness. God always protects the Hapsburgs.

STÉPHANIE'S MARRIAGE AND ITS POLITICAL REASONS

It was said to have been a love-match. But courtiers who spoke with Rudolph soon after his return from making Stéphanie's acquaintance at Brussels have given me his impressions. which were anything but flattering to her.

Indeed, he made no secret about the matter. His terrible father had desired him to marry her and he did marry her. From his sceptical point of view, matrimony was of no great importance.

As for the reasons which impelled Francis Joseph to want a Belgian princess as a daughter-in-law after having driven a Belgian sister-in-law into a madhouse, it is not difficult to unravel them when

we consider the political situation of Austria at the time of the marriage. Having been shut out by Bismarck from all part or lot in the German Confederation, driven back towards the Balkans in the East, and confronted with new and formidable problems, Austria wanted to retain a certain influence in Western Europe at all costs. She had controlled Hanover for a long time, but Bismarck had put an end to that, and the whole period of renunciation had been very painful. So Francis Joseph recalled the phrase, "Tu, felix Austria, nube." A good marriage would enable him to stretch a long arm right away to the other side of Germany, and the Belgian dynasty would accept the match in spite of the martyrdom of its other Princess, for it then regarded Prussia as its most terrible enemy.

So Rudolph and Stéphanie were married in May 1881, and another idyll was prepared by the Royal Houses of Austria and Belgium, though they already had plenty of sentimental reasons to look askance at one another. And all might have proceeded as happily as the proverbial marriage bells, if it had not been for Rudolph, who was a bad politician, however thorough a lover he might be.

LEOPOLD II. AND FRANCIS JOSEPH

Many thought that the offer of the Hapsburg crown to a Belgian princess was intended as a sort of compensation for the shocking fate that had overtaken Princess Charlotte. But King Leopold was an old fox and not to be trapped so easily. He consented to give away his daughter, the victim's niece, to the son of the executioner; but he retained his suspicions of the family with which he was now allying himself a second time by closer bonds. For he held Francis Joseph and his entourage personally responsible for Charlotte's madness. And neither in the streets when he drove with the Emperor and Empress, nor at the state banquet, nor at the gala performance when all eyes were turned to the royal box, did he conceal his extraordinary coldness. This has been told to my mother by many Court personages who were close to Leopold during the celebration of Stéphanie's betrothal.

I have also heard how uncomfortable everybody was at the state banquet. Francis Joseph ate silently and very fast, as though he were being chased by wild Tartars. Elisabeth was disdainful and very pale. When Leopold spoke to her in



common politeness, she turned her head the other way. She said afterwards that she had no desire to converse with "the commercial king."

As Leopold understood perfectly well what share the Hapsburgs had in the misfortunes of his sister and daughters, his attitude towards his daughters is all the more strange. Francis Joseph might have forgiven them for shaking off the yoke. Leopold, their father, never forgave them.

HOW STÉPHANIE CAME TO MARRY LÓNYAY

Stéphanie was not a light or ambitious woman, as some have represented her to be.

She was merely a jealous woman.

She screamed, she cursed, she broke the furniture, she scandalised the haughty Hapsburg ancestors who frowned down at her from their dusty frames. Rudolph liked her well enough in his way. But between dissolute intelligence and honest mediocrity there is such a great gulf fixed that it can never be bridged by two people who have to live together all their lives. Every attempt to bring the edges nearer together only reveals the depth of the abyss.

After the tragedy of Meyerling, Stéphanie en-

countered the same old hostile indifference at Court. The Empress had wrapped herself up in her grief and wandered about the world like a lost soul. Perhaps the Emperor was the only one to show Stéphanie any sort of regard. But he was by no means demonstrative and he certainly did not make up to her for the disappointments of her first marriage.

Her long struggle with Francis Joseph to obtain his consent to her marriage with Count Lónyay is common property, but the way in which that consent was extorted is known to few. I heard about it from the Countess of Bergen, who had been lady-in-waiting to Stéphanie. It was she who first introduced my mother to the Archduchess.

After the tragedy of Meyerling, Stéphanie spent many years in her Castle of Luxemburg, some nine miles out of Vienna, living there very quietly with her daughter Elisabeth. Then one fine day she returned to the world and informed the Emperor with unwonted firmness that she wished to marry Count Lónyay, a rich if not very noble chamberlain of her household. They had been in love for some time.

The Emperor was inflexible. The Archduchess

fell ill of a mysterious illness that lasted nine months and necessitated a mysterious operation. It was performed by Dr. Oser assisted by Dr. Kerzel, and the only people present were the old Emperor and the Archduchess Maria Theresa, widow of his favourite brother Charles Louis.

The operation succeeded. But when Stéphanie recovered, she seemed like a living corpse. Her characteristic face was so much changed that, when she took her afternoon drives in the Prater, the good people of Vienna did not bow to her for they simply did not recognize her.

So the Emperor was induced to bow to an accomplished fact and permit the marriage of the Archduchess to Count Lónyay of Nagy-Lónya.

The wedding took place on the 22nd of March 1900 at the Castle of Miramar, lent by the Emperor for the honeymoon. It was too late to think of orange-blossoms, but Stéphanie wanted some flowers to bring her luck in her new life. She asked for a wreath of roses. But roses do not grow at Miramar, where the garden is too much exposed to the wind. So the roses were procured from Trieste.

Thus it came to pass that Miramar, which had

witnessed the departure of Maximilian and Charlotte for Mexico, now welcomed a very different couple, reopening windows that had remained closed for many years, windows like eyes that retained the same old expression of dreamy indifference.

There is a certain justice in events, as the old Emperor must have realised when he returned to visit Miramar. For that same castle that had witnessed his offer of Mexico's crown of thorns to his good brother, now saw him crown his son's widow with a wreath of roses, extorted from him by the force of facts.

TO-DAY

There is a certain justice in events.

As for Louise, I need not mention her again after her romantic flight from Bad Elster. She has lived in Paris with her Lieutenant Mattassich in a house surrounded by trees and flowers, asking only to be left in peace. Let us too leave her in peace.

Since the war, Stéphanie has become one of the Red Cross Ladies in Austria. Let us hope that the two sisters may find in their Lónyay and Mat-

tassich some consolation for all they have suffered through their connexion with the Hapsburgs, or at least the comfort of oblivion, which has been vouchsafed to their unfortunate Aunt Charlotte.

To sum up. The recent relations of Austria and Belgium, which Austrian circles refer back to the period of the Congress of Vienna; the unhappy history of the three Belgian princesses; the interference of the Austrian Court with the private life of Leopold II.; the attitude of the present Queen of the Belgians, who is a Bavarian Princess and doubtless shudders when she recalls the treatment meted out by the Hofburg to the Empress Elisabeth, another Bavarian Princess: all these afford at least a partial explanation of the behaviour of the two Central Empires towards Belgium.

Many dynastic and psychological influences combined to form a hostile current between the two States.

And it seems to me that a certain visit of Austro-German aeroplanes, as insistent as a flight of gnats, over the royal Palace at Antwerp, with designs on the life of the royal family, had its origin in these old stories.

Will other Belgian Princesses spend their first

nights of love on the couches of the Hofburg? Will there be other little heaps of ashes in the dark corners of the rooms to commemorate their bridal dreams?

Human events are so strange and politics move in such a mysterious way that I do not venture to say Yes or No.



CHAPTER IX

FRANCIS JOSEPH, PATERFAMILIAS

I AM not going to judge Francis Joseph. It is useless to analyse a man who never said anything. He did this and that. Very well. But that does not give us an insight into his heart, least of all when we are dealing with a sovereign.

Still, when we behold so many sad events and one man affected by them all, we begin to wonder whether he was above or at the back of all the pain with which he was chastised. He was a strange being and we want to search his soul with inquisitive eyes.

Then we are moved to great melancholy. A whole block of houses has fallen, save one; and that one, standing alone, makes us sadder than all those which have fallen. In a field of stubble you may see one bent ear that has not been cut because the scythe refused to touch it.

I have surveyed his life all through. After relating stories old and new, I wanted to find a connecting link between them and the Emperor as he

really was. But the man hid himself so thoroughly in the sovereign that no verdict is possible. When a man feels that he is the State and that the State is only another name for himself, he is bound to bolt and bar all doors on his feelings, however deep they may happen to be. Imagination alone can open those doors, not historical truth. But imagination may help us sometimes.

Francis Joseph was born at the Castle of Schönbrunn on the 18th of August, 1830. His parents were the Archduke Francis Charles and the Archduchess Sophia.

Schönbrunn in 1830. I can see the park on a moonlight night, shrubberies shrouded in shadows, labyrinths of pergolas, the distant castle suggesting fairy-tales, muffled music from who knows where, a halo of silver and cotton-wool over every projecting shape, and two people walking along the alleys, heeding none of these things. They are kissing each other. Did you see them by the light of that ray through the foliage? They are the Duke of Reichstadt, Napoleon's son, and the Archduchess Sophia . . . No, no, that must have been a bad joke played by the moon.

Some people have detected a likeness between



the portrait of the Aiglon and that of young Francis Joseph. Look for yourselves. I know nothing about it.

During his early years, as everybody knows, Francis Joseph was proud and violent, anything but a gentle soul. His own inclinations and his mother's whims made him utterly self-centred; he had no consideration even for her. She devoted all her efforts to his external development, for was he not the future ruler? She never taught him to show gratitude for kind words or for those lessons which hurt at first and then appear blessings on reflection. He was the future Emperor. So she cultivated his bad inclinations, as though she liked to watch the growth of poisonous flowers. He became haughty and sensuous, though he studied languages and history, took an interest in the army and went serenely to Church. It was an unhealthy education, with tiresome restrictions and undue liberty.

Thus Francis Joseph passed from the tedium of close studies to the discipline of barracks, to the perfume of incense and the sharp satisfaction of unhealthy desires. At eighteen he became Emperor.

He too had his idyll. It was at just the right age,

—twenty-three. He would have been incapable of it either before or after. It was like the growth of a violet that adapts itself ill to an Imperial garden full of fleshly flowers. So it faded quickly and never bloomed again. It did not bloom when he returned to his chill exaggerated rooms, satiated with some actress at the Burg Theatre, satiated with himself as well. At the saddest moment of his life, when his only son Rudolph died, I wonder whether his neglected wife stretched out a hand to soothe his grief. I would like to think she did.

The idyll is related thus: Having gone to visit his uncle, Maximilian of Bavaria, intending to marry his eldest daughter, he chanced to see another small cousin, Elisabeth, and he fell in love, regardless of his Imperial dignity. A May evening, the shadows of pine-trees, an innocent plot to bring the child to a ball to which she had not been invited, blushes and pretty speeches—these sufficed to turn the proud, wayward young Emperor into a mild suitor. At last the betrothal was officially announced. That was his one good hour.

If we knew how Francis Joseph's love came to life, we might also understand why it died so soon. He may have seen many strange and beautiful

things in the strange eyes of his little cousin, but when those eyes reflected nothing but the tiresome halls of the Hofburg, the Emperor realised that his idyll had been on the surface only, and weariness ensued. Elisabeth might enjoy her solitary slumbers undisturbed, for no one would come to rouse her.

In 1855, a year after the marriage, his first daughter, Sophia, was born only to die very soon, poor little thing. Elisabeth was very unhappy, for she had hoped to find a comfort in her loneliness, a rampart against the unkindness of her sour and hostile mother-in-law, the Archduchess Sophia.

Another daughter, Gisella, appeared in 1856. "What a disgrace to have only daughters when you are the wife of an Emperor," was the Archduchess' polite remark to her daughter-in-law soon after the confinement. The dear lady was right. It was really scandalous. However, there was still time to do better.

At last the male heir came, though it took two years. He was born on the 21st of August, 1858; and poor Elisabeth gave great sighs of relief. But the mother-in-law continued to put acid into her

talk and Francis Joseph was discreet enough to remain aloof.

Some time accordingly elapsed before another daughter appeared. Marie Valérie was born in 1868. It is true that Elisabeth had spent a good part of the interval in racing round the world, impelled by her woes, and that her mind was somewhat unhinged; this last child was the only fruit of her reconciliation.

The Emperor displayed little tenderness towards children. But he devoted a certain amount of time to Rudolph. Always, however, with great reserve, as is meet for an Emperor. There had to be all sorts of strict regulations in the Court ceremonial. Oh! for those happy times when a king was only a good old father, who could sit in front of the fire and teach babies to dance on his knees.

All the same, he was fond of Rudolph; and this made him specially resent a curse that was flung in his face at a public audience by a mother, who was a mediatised German Princess but at that moment remembered only the fact that she was a mother.

The thing happened in this way. I heard about it from my mother who was lady-in-waiting at the

Palace that day and was in the room at the time. It was also talked about in my presence by other people, for the story had its vogue and used to be recalled later on whenever a fresh calamity overtook the Emperor.

The Princess was the last of her race and had an only son, a very young and handsome subaltern who had only just left the military academy; he was the whole world to her. For some utterly silly reason, the boy was challenged to a duel one evening by a brother-officer, and it was to be quite a serious affair. The unhappy mother, half mad with fear, ran and threw herself at the Emperor's feet, imploring him to stop these children and avert a tragedy. The duel was to take place in a couple of days.

But the Emperor was very strict about all matters of form and quite uncompromising about points of honour, especially about such as have no importance. So he was hard and abrupt in his refusal.

The mother, however, refused to abandon hope. Two days still remained. She applied for another audience on the morrow. This was granted, as it was a day of "public audience." The Emperor hardened his heart still more in the presence of high

Court dignitaries and made her no reply. Instead, he sent an adjutant to tell her that the duel had been hurried on by His Majesty's orders on the ground that it had to take place and no further interference could be tolerated. The adjutant added that her son was dead.

The poor Princess remained standing in the middle of the hall, unable to open her lips. The Emperor, the dignitaries, the gilded walls, everything seemed to have disappeared. Then at last a great wild cry burst forth from her very heart: "May your son die too! May he come to a disgraceful end!"

The Emperor was visibly disturbed. He made no attempt to conceal his feelings. The Court dignitaries were disturbed too, pale with horror at so gross a violation of all etiquette, as they watched the Princess depart like a revengeful Nemesis. They would have been paler still if they could have known that she was a true prophetess.

THE EMPEROR AMUSES HIMSELF

But you must not go away with the impression that the Emperor's life was one long lamentation. The fates seemed determined to make it so. There were political catastrophes enough and to spare.

A revolution heralded his accession to the throne; he lost Lombardy and Venice, the two loveliest and dearest of his provinces; his dreams of German hegemony were dissipated by an upstart sovereign and a middle-class politician; he saw all his astutest and absurdest diplomacy brought to naught; his august hands had to concede shreds of that liberty which he only denied to others because, poor fellow, he loved it too much for itself. His reign was a long succession of renunciations. And his private life proved even more bitter than his public one. There was no affectionate repose to be found in a wife whose absence provided an incessant, mute reproach; in a strange and rebellious son; in daughters as cold as the education they had received; in the brothers, cousins, nephews, and all the race that wallowed in blood and slime like beings in Dante's Hell; no repose even when Death wielded her great scythe all round him until his Imperial person stood out alone in its ever increasing impotence. . . . But it is not to harp on such things that I have entitled this paragraph, "The Emperor amuses himself." I hope you understand that.

Well, in spite of all his griefs, Francis Joseph often contrived to amuse himself. Sometimes

rather cruelly perhaps, as, for instance, in the case of Belfiore and the hundred executions after the Hungarian revolution. But as a rule fairly innocently. He was a regular patron of the drama, especially at the Burg Theatre, and his artistic enthusiasm often led him to send a sudden invitation to the leading lady to visit him in his Imperial apartment, even though the hour was quite late. The good, inquisitive people of Vienna have related dozens and dozens of instances of such august interest in the dramatic art of the nation. The only person who saw any harm in it was that strange Empress Elisabeth, and she had so little intelligence that her Viennese subjects used to call her "the little Bavarian goose." Intelligent or not, she managed to make herself unhappy over the business.

By the way, it was from that class of actress that Francis Joseph eventually selected Catherine Schratt, the companion of his declining years.

Then there was sport, the Emperor's other great passion. He could ride like a cow-boy and shoot as straight as any Swiss or Tyrolese. Many days of his busy life were given up to strenuous bear-hunts in the Carpathians and stag-hunts on the wooded hills near Vienna. Sport alone could induce him

to shake off his haughty manners when he crossed the boundaries of his domains. But even here his wife used to put spokes in his wheels.

Sometimes I say to myself, "But even Francis Joseph must have taken his baby on his knees sometimes and wanted to kiss him and hug him and feel intimate with him. Had he no desire for tenderness? Or had he some premonition that those tiny hands, now tugging at his whiskers, would some day be steeped in filth; that in that small mind, now amused by a gold button or a nodding plume, terrible dramas would one day be hatched; that those baby cries might develop into a yell of rebellion?" We take these mysterious little beings into our arms and they contain all our future.

He suffered too, that cruel, inscrutable Emperor, during the cold morning hours of that dying January. And his sufferings must have been increased by the reflection that the fault was largely his.

If Francis Joseph cared for his son—and he must have cared for him unless sovereigns are strangers to the laws of nature—he remained a stranger to his education. The boy was hardly born before the Emperor, deferring to the advice of his mother, the Archduchess Sophia, who hated Elisabeth, took him



Photograph, Paul Thompson.

FRANCIS JOSEPH AND HIS FAMOUS THOROUGHBRED SADDLE HORSES



away from his mother's care and gave him over to nurses and tutors. That was another occasion for Elisabeth's departure, so as not to have this annoyance always under her eyes. Little Rudolph's grandmother encouraged his pride and morbid self-indulgence, so that he grew up strange and sickly. Francis Joseph must have noticed this, for when the child was ten years old, he summoned his consort back to Court and she consented to return for her son's sake. Perhaps she persuaded herself that it was her duty to return not only as a mother but as a wife. If so, the illusion did not last long, only long enough to see the birth of her last daughter, Marie Valérie. And she gave herself up entirely to her little son.

But she was not well fitted to bring him up either. It was necessary to yield in everything to the autocratic little invalid so as to win him by love. And she suffered to see his baby mind precociously satiated with life and sceptical about the future, tending unconsciously to sensuality, giving way desperately to melancholy moods, weeping over Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* or Schubert's *Lieder* when she appealed to them to dispel the loneliness from her own heart.

One day when she scolded him for being naughty and told him God would not love him unless he became a better boy, he answered sternly and seriously, "God made me as I am. He must be content with what He has made."

Elisabeth had an intuition of the human grief which was beginning to possess his soul. Not so Francis Joseph. He had neither the time nor the inclination. Had he not given his beloved son good fencing-masters and professors of history for his education? And, for the salvation of his soul, there were as many confessors as any one could desire.

When Rudolph came of age at sixteen, Francis Joseph again arranged to separate him from his mother, and she started off once more as a wanderer on the face of the world. Now it became necessary to think seriously about the military education of the heir to the throne.

But if Rudolph shared his father's fervent love for women and the chase, it was not the same with his military ardour. Indeed, all idea of discipline was repugnant to his free spirit. And by making militarism the basis of all their relationship, Francis Joseph estranged him more and more, nourish-

ing rebellion in his heart. It is related how the Emperor alighted one day at a station where his son, who had now become a colonel, was waiting for him with a number of officers. Rudolph had not seen his father for some time and came forward to embrace him. But Francis Joseph checked his impulse with military coldness and said, "Have you any report to make to me, Colonel?"

Thus it was that, in trying to make a soldier of him, he only succeeded in bringing him up to be a bad son and an unhappy man.

Francis Joseph was always cold and almost hostile towards Stéphanie, the wife of Rudolph. Whenever she burst like a jealous hurricane into the Emperor's study and poured out tales of her husband's latest scandalous escapades, Francis Joseph received her with contemptuous and rather ironical pride. Let her look after herself. He was not responsible for his son's infidelities. And they were comparatively unimportant. If only Rudolph had had healthier political ideas! But the tragic day of Meyerling brought the Emperor remorse for what he might have done and did not do.

Thenceforward the series of his domestic calamities increased in volume. His wife went away for



the last time and died. Then his daughter-in-law Stéphanie departed with her little daughter Elisabeth, whom he dearly loved; and finally there was her marriage with Count Lónyay.

His two daughters Gisella and Marie Valérie, married, one to Duke Leopold of Bavaria and the other to the Hapsburg Archduke Francis Salvador, rarely brought the chatter and smiles of their babies to the empty majesty of the halls of the Hofburg. The poor old Emperor began to feel the need of a comforter.

She came in the person of Catherine Schratt, formerly an actress at the Burg Theatre, and only deceased a few years ago. First, his mistress. But what then? A good friend and nothing more? It is said that he married her morganatically. During her last years she lived at the Castle of Schönbrunn.

And every morning the old Emperor drove in a closed carriage through the thick mists of winter by the light of a sickly little sun, or else strolled through the alleys amid the scents of new-mown hay and trees streaming with the dampness of a summer night, and she was always waiting to receive him at the Castle with a fresh smile on her old face, there behind the panes of a low window.



There was no amorous poetry about their meetings, nothing like the romantic dallyings of the pale Duke of Reichstadt and the coquettish lady of the Austrian Court. But there was a good fire to keep out the bitter cold of winter, a refreshing drink prepared by cunning hands in parching summertime. There was at least some one to pity him and welcome him if only with the wheeze of an elderly cough.

How difficult it is to wind up a life when you have lived too long!



CHAPTER X

THE RAPACIOUS HAPSBURGS

THIEVES? No. God forbid! I should never forgive myself all my life if I brought such a charge against the Imperial and royal House. Let us say "political necessity," and we shall not go far wrong. Now we understand one another.

You may say, "Yes, but a sovereign who set himself to despoil rich families by lawsuits and illegal means! Everybody would discover such a thing at once and there would be as big a hullabaloo as if a dog were found barking in the midst of a flock of young geese." There you are quite mistaken.

In Austria, the Emperor is the whole of the Hapsburg family, for he summarizes all their virtues, vices and tendencies. But that is not to say that all the Hapsburgs are the equivalent of the Emperor himself.

Have you ever had dreams when you suffered from indigestion? Sometimes a devil-fish has appeared to me with glutinous, tearing tentacles that

sucked and penetrated everywhere, and it was no use cutting them off, for they just squirted some horrid black blood and there they were again. And one never knew where they came from. But at last the disgusting body got twisted up too, with its two ugly red eyes and a beak like a door-knocker rattling about. In Austria there have been many bad dreams like that. And not only in Austria, for the tentacles of the Hapsburgs travel far enough over Europe, and the Emperor knew how to make use of them.

The Emperor was very fond of playing on the organ. You may not have known it, but there it was. Not of course the ordinary organ with its well-polished pipes and all sorts of wonderful voices. Francis Joseph's was quite a different instrument. It was begun by his ancestors, but in its ultimate shape it was almost entirely of his own making. And what a marvellous creation! Think that the pipes are dotted about here and there among many towns of Europe, both large and small, some actually in royal palaces; not only beneath smoky northern skies but in those three peninsulas which take warm baths in the blue Mediterranean.

The Emperor had his keyboard at the Hofburg.



The bellows were worked by his partisans with a current of air that pleased everybody. The tune reached the pipes by telegraph (that was his own invention). And he was an excellent player.

Remember how many Hapsburgs there are in Europe, or else connections of theirs like the Coburgs. Consult history and the Almanach de Gotha. Then you will see how skilfully Francis Joseph made use of the various branches of his family and the fascinating graces of the numerous Archdukes and Archduchesses for his crafty matrimonial and domestic policy.

There was one reed ready to his hand in Tuscany. Peter Leopold and all his descendants. When he had extracted that tentacle from the Italian flesh, cleaned it and repaired it, the Emperor cast it forth for the conquest of Saxony in the person of Louise Antoinette, now Mrs. Toselli. That fine attempt was not much of a success. Think of Marie Louise of Parma and her ugly but very intelligent lover, the imperial Count of Neipperg. Their children are now known by the Italianized name of Montenuovo. Then there was Duke Francis IV. of Este. You remember his Austrophil policy and his betrayal of the Italian cause. It was

not for nothing that he was the nephew of Francis I., the husband of Maria Theresa: and Francis Joseph's heir, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his brother Otho were of the family of Este too. And many other Italian princes were so much the servants of Austria in Italy that we are entitled to regard them as minor but by no means negligible members of the great Hapsburg family. So much for Italy. I might go on to speak of the formidable policy of the Hapsburgs in Wurtemberg and Bavaria, where Hymen has woven its webs more than once with the illustrious house of Austria; or of the series of unfortunate attempts with the Coburgs in Bulgaria and Belgium. Even the wife of the Duke of Orleans was an Austrian Archduchess.

Is all this politics? Well, there has often been something still more solid than interests of state. Money! For nowadays the gods need money if they want to live happily on this venal planet, and the Olympus of the Hofburg cannot collect too much gold. How can gold be collected better than from the gifts of beauty offered by Nature to their young divinities? Thus the very rich Prince Thurn and Taxis of Ratisbon married an imperial and royal Archduchess; another became Princess of



Lichtenstein; the Emperor's own niece married the Prince of Windischgraetz; and his own daughter Gisella was content to become Duchess Leopold of Bavaria. Even Countess Wrbna, fairly rich and the daughter of a Sovereign House (the Viennese call her Würmb because they hate Slav names), was well received by the Emperor; she brought a big patrimony and rendered fairly complicated services to the Imperial House. As you see, we are here in presence of high matrimonial strategy and not of love affairs. You must admit that Francis Joseph, though by no means a genius in the ordinary way, was really an extraordinary man when he embarked upon what is called *Familienpolitik* and the defense of dynastic interests.

One observation and then I will return to my argument.

When members of their family were driven out by wars or revolutions, the Hapsburgs were not merely content to use them for the conquest of other thrones or at least of fat estates. There were so many other foreign families who had been turned out of house and home for the same or other reasons and who were on the lookout for new lodgings. The period between 1840 and 1870 was specially

full of them. The Hapsburgs gave them a friendly invitation to transfer their goods and chattels to Austria, where they would find themselves perfectly at home.

A few who were weary of the solemnity of royal palaces went off to Paris. But most of them feared God and hoped with His help and that of their illustrious hosts, the Hapsburgs, to return one day to their ancient seats, so they came to Austria and stayed there.

The hospitality was not precisely disinterested. These families had money and it was better that they should spend it on the sacred soil of Austria than anywhere else. Besides, they brought with them very many things that were well worth knowing when you succeeded in winning their confidence. But the most useful thing of all was to acclimatise them beneath the plausible roof of the Hofburg. Austrophils they became first, then Austrians, eventually champions of the Austrian policy. A court of foreign families, all mediatised and austrofied—that was a fine dream for the Hapsburgs. In the past, when Austria was really a very great Power, she had already had the privilege of beholding at her Court a whole crowd of sovereigns or

half-sovereigns. And she had been clever enough to make a good profit out of them. I need only mention Prince Eugene of Savoy.

So there came to Austria, among others, the old King of Hanover and all his family; the Comte de Chambord, nephew of Charles X. and rightful heir to the throne of France, with his wife Maria Theresa, an Imperial and royal Princess of Austria; the Schwarzenbergs, mediatised and exiled German Princes, who came to spend their enormous revenues; the famous Württemberg, and the very rich and gifted Princess Clementine of Orleans, mother of Philip of Coburg and of the Bulgarian Czar.

The following also took refuge in Austria: the Princes of Montléart, Rohan, Beaufort-Spontin, Talleyrand-Périgord, Blacas-d'Aulps; the Marquises and Counts Bougnoi, Beaulieu-Marconney, Bombelles; Desfours, and Latours, who was hanged on a lamp-post in 1848 by an infuriated mob. Also the Barons Seyssel-d'Aix, Cronier d'Orléans, Piccot de Paccaduc, and ever so many others. Also the sister of the Regent Luitpold of Bavaria, who buried his two nephews, the mad kings. She spent her whole life at Vienna. And Alphonso XII. of

Spain was brought up at the Theresianum College, where he was a schoolfellow of my elder brother Hadrian. Alphonso afterwards married Marie Cristina, an Austrian Archduchess. These are merely a few that happen to occur to my mind. But they suffice to show what a big caravanserai Austria was for the dispossessed. Board and lodging are dear there, but the place provides every comfort and the rapacious landlords do a roaring trade.

Imperial and Royal rapacity. That is why there is a bird of prey on their coat of arms, a bird with very long claws. Touch it who dare! I am reminded of an event that dates a very long way back.

Have you forgotten Maria Theresa and the chivalrous Hungarian aristocracy? When the Empress was persecuted by her enemies, she sought refuge with her faithful Magyars who drew their swords and cried with one breath, *"Moriamur pro rege nostro, Maria Teresa!"* What was their reward? The Empress' relations and her noble ministers conceived the very generous plan of attracting the Hungarian aristocracy to Court in order to im-

poverish it. The reason was that it was too rich and therefore too independent.

So it was impoverished by the enormous extravagance of Court life, by taxes, by high offices, that cost millions without bringing in a halfpenny of revenue. Up to then, the Hungarian aristocracy had lived as worthy country-gentlemen; their castles had been designed for the storage of a great deal of grain, or for resisting those flights of locusts, the Turks, who came that way from time to time through force of habit. The life was that of rustic soldiers, who acquired riches and robust health. The thing was to ruin them with luxury and all sorts of costly habits,—in other words, to bring about their degeneration. As for their money and property, these would serve incidentally to fatten the Court of Vienna.

I note with pleasure that Maria Theresa, the last of the real Hapsburgs, did not on that occasion behave as a Hapsburg of the present day would have done. She said to her Chancellor, Prince Kaunitz, the moral predecessor of Metternich, when he explained the crafty and ambiguous details of this plan, *"Es ist zu abscheulich!"*—it is too

foul. And her fat, fair face betrayed real disgust. But her successors were not so squeamish.

Maria Theresa was a strange sovereign. Perhaps because she was a woman, she could not adapt herself to the rapacious policy of her ancestors and successors, who trod and tread heavily on people and persons, crushing them for the benefit of the most illustrious House. And she was utterly opposed to the partition of Poland. So much so that, when the decree was submitted for her Imperial approval, she wrote upon it, "Agreed! Because so many wise and important men desire it. All the same, when I shall have been long dead, you will realise the enormity of the evil and of the blunder you are committing."

But Maria Theresa was a woman and her ministers were watchful. The sound political sentiment of the august Hapsburg sovereign, a rare exception in her family, was confined to her honest intentions. And the valiant Hungarian aristocracy issued from the ordeal utterly ruined. It still exists to-day, but it is assailed by slier and more complicated methods than those of Prince Kaunitz. And among those who carry on the campaign, you will find Francis Joseph playing the part of an Imperial Shylock,

About the year 1900 he was a creditor of the Hungarian Prince Esterhazy for more than twelve millions of crowns and now you may consider him the virtual owner of the immense estates of that very noble family.

And the partition of Poland took place in due course. And now Austria is preparing to engulf the whole of Poland in her fat knapsack whence other ill-digested provinces are struggling to escape. She is already licking her lips. But she is like a greedy snake that watches a bird flying rather high up in the air.

Just a moment. The old Emperor is sleeping, dressed, as he is so fond of dressing, in the costume of a Tyrolese sportsman. Let us look and see what there is in the sack which he has on his back. If you think of all his House's fabulous possessions in lands and castles, in every one of which you can still detect the badly muffled name of some other family, you will say, "Here is an application of the old distych, *Tu, felix Austria, nube.*" Look again, and nine times out of ten you will recognise the profits of continuous, systematic confiscations that have gone on for centuries. And the eight millions a year of the Emperor's uncle, the terrible Arch-



Photograph, Paul Thompson.

FRANCIS JOSEPH IN HUNTING COSTUME



duke Albrecht? There is no denying that they afforded ample compensation for the Custozza and Novara. And the financial smash of 1873? What a number of bankrupts among the Emperor's over-rich or over-independent followers. My father was among them, experiencing his second ruin after that which was brought about by his brother Oliver, losing his French fortune of three millions. It was only the Imperial and royal family which came out of the great financial disaster richer than ever.

And now that the Hapsburgs have filled their sack so well, they decide to make use of the services of Aulic Councillor Wetsch. You remember I mentioned him in connexion with the parsimony of the Empress Elisabeth. His orders are to keep the dykes closed, to practise the most rigid economy, to tighten the purse-strings in view of worse times coming. And perhaps he has other orders too; to make financial reparation for the transfer of the Hapsburgs from Vienna to Budapest. That would accord with one of the clauses in Bismarck's famous political testament: "Out with Austria from the German body-politic!" And Bismarck's testament is undoubtedly but a new edition of an older decla-

ration, that of Charlemagne, who saw in the "Ostmark" a sturdy bulwark against Asia.

Is that to be? Poor new victims in that case! The privileged Imperial rapacity will work wonders for Poland, perhaps for the Ukraine, certainly for Hungary, even greater wonders than those which have gone before.

But the fate of peoples usually moves us less deeply than that of a family. I could tell you so many stories, both new and old, to bring home to you the exceptional voracity of this illustrious House.

I have already afforded you a few hints in the course of my memoirs: for instance, the struggle to relieve Louise and Stéphanie of their rich paternal inheritance. To-day my memory is full of another sad case, that goes some years back; I have myself lived through the last pages of the story.

At Vienna in 1845 or later. A narrow, tortuous street, which seemed of a morning to have some difficulty in separating itself from the shades of night. Many low, dark beer-houses puffed their acrid fumes onto the roadway. In a corner was a little hat-shop. Nothing smart about it, you may be sure. Bonnets and caps, fixed together with a

few rags, the sort of things for work-girls and market-women when they wanted to deck themselves out for Sundays. Or some little hat made out of next to nothing, say two flowers and two ribbons, might peep out with a springtime smile. You could detect a certain amount of taste in the window, and it was obviously not that of Mrs. Geiger, the proprietor. Perhaps that of her daughter, that small, plump girl with straw-coloured hair, a pleasant little face and china-blue eyes that seemed always full of wonder. She was called Konstanze and was such a strange child. For instance, she was not satisfied with making hats, like her mother. No, she had insisted on becoming an actress at the Karl Theatre, where the public had given her a terrible nickname, *das Wunderwutzerl,* the little whirling wonder, in allusion to her movements and expression. The public of Vienna is mischievous especially towards respectable actresses. And against the respectability of little Konstanze Geiger there was nothing to be imagined. She had a hard life of it, however, poor thing. In the mornings, she made hats with a certain amount of taste. In the drowsy afternoon hours she gave herself up to the consoling voices of her only real friends, the

piano and the violin. Her music was like her soul. It seemed to have been fashioned out of the said shadows of that wretched back-shop, out of the rare gaiety afforded by a bit of blue sky filtering through the old houses and sad longings to see it again when it disappeared. And so one day she became a famous pianist.

She left the hat-shop and the Karl Theatre to give concerts in fashionable houses. She always appeared at the soirées of my maternal grandfather, Count Strachwitz, in his palace in the Jägerzeile, now rechristened Práterstrasse. She must have been about my mother's age and they became good friends.

It was thus that my mother became aware of an idyll that no one else had noticed, an idyll that grew up very quietly, making no more noise about its birth and growth than a blade of grass. There had been only an exchange of glances with the young Prince who sat near her piano, nearer than anybody else, in the melancholy atmosphere of the candles, in the vague shiver of a soft sonata. Sometimes, while a page was being turned, a whisper of love.

One fine day the aristocratic world of Austria

was astounded by the news of the engagement of H.R.H. Duke Ernest of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha-Kohàry to the poor, dear Wunderwutzerl.

The wedding took place. But the Duke well knew the greed of his illustrious family and his still more illustrious relatives, the Hapsburgs. The very rich patrimony of the Kohàrys belonged to him and he wanted to guarantee the enjoyment of it to his wife and children in any case. So he contracted the marriage in a special way with quite new judicial forms and unusual precautions in order to protect his family against the attacks which he undoubtedly foresaw.

This marriage was unique in legal history and is tabulated as the Koburger-Heirat.

But it was of no avail. The Duke died very soon, leaving a widow who had no experience of intrigues and a son who was too young to defend himself and his mother. Then the rapacity of the Court of Vienna stood revealed in the light of day.

The Emperor Francis Joseph had conferred upon Konstanze Geiger the name and title of Baroness of Rutterstein on the occasion of her marriage. But whether directly or indirectly, he backed up the shameful conspiracy of Duke Ernest's family

against the poor Baroness and her son, Duke Francis, in favour of that shining light of all the virtues, Philip of Coburg. And among the most dangerous enemies of the Baroness was Princess Clementine of Coburg-Orleans, the mother of Philip of Coburg and of King Ferdinand of Bulgaria.

There was no trickery or legal process or injustice which they did not use to deprive the widow of the whole of her husband's fortune. Of course they succeeded. Baroness Rutterstein and her son Francis, despoiled of all the property which Duke Ernest had possessed in Austria, followed by continuous persecutions, had to retire to Paris.

It was at Paris in 1886, when I was there with my mother, that we renewed acquaintance with Baroness Rutterstein and her son, Duke Francis of Coburg-Rutterstein. They were living in a large house in the rue Pergolése, on a sum of money that was considerable in itself but small in comparison with the stolen fortune. The late Duke Ernest had had the foresight to deposit it with the Bank of England, out of the reach of the claws of the two-headed eagle. But the persecution was not relaxed even in Paris. Demands came from Vienna for the return of the money deposited

abroad, but the Bank of England refused point-blank. So the hunger of the Hapsburgs remained unsatisfied.

Baroness Rutterstein then brought an action against her husband's relatives to recover her fortune. My mother was her best friend and also had old scores against the Court of Vienna. I remember her translating and copying out for the Baroness the long and complicated will of Duke Ernest, which left the *whole* of his property to his widow. She did it in an incredibly short time, working at it for two days and two nights. It was a fierce and almost fruitless struggle. For the Baroness had the utmost difficulty in obtaining an annuity for her son, it appears, through the personal intervention of Queen Victoria of England. Five hundred pounds a year, not so much as half the usual allowance of the Princes of the House of Coburg.

Nor did the persecutions of the Coburgs stop here, backed up as they were by the Court of Vienna. I was present one day when the Baroness brought a very serious charge against Princess Clementine, the mother of Philip of Coburg. The charge was one of attempted poisoning and the Baroness would certainly have succumbed if Dr.

Morin had not chanced to come to the rue Pergolése at the right moment.

Baroness Rutterstein and her son are both dead. He has left some memoirs of his brief life and they are full of pessimism.

The savage pursuit of them and their millions was specially intended to enrich Philip of Coburg, now a general of cavalry if his many years and many libations and the consequences of his orgies still permit him to sit on horseback. And it appears to me a certain consolation to think that at least some part of the money which dearest Philip stole from Konstanze Geiger was scattered to the four winds by his wife.

So now you have this bright proof of the disinterestedness of the Hapsburgs. I reflect with some bitterness that in Austria, if you want to bestow fortunes on people of the type of Mr. Schanz, Louis Victor's handsome friend, you must first rob some one like the poor honest Wunderwutzerl of all that she possesses. And I could give you many other similar examples. But I will content myself with relating what my own family had to suffer through the intrigues of the Court of Vienna.

That, however, on another occasion.



CHAPTER XI

FRANCIS JOSEPH, MAN OF THE WORLD

It is said that old age brings peaceful little white clouds upon a sky that has resigned itself not to see to-morrow's sun. It derives from its experiences the right to laugh at so many things, to reflect that it was not really worth while to endure fatigue and suffering in order to come so far. There is nothing to be done but stand still and wait for death.

That being so, you will agree that Francis Joseph had a very strange nature. To have outlived misfortunes may be a negative gift, and family virtues belong to the average honest burgher. But to have troubled about the affairs of your country after reigning sixty-eight years, to persevere with all the outward manifestations of life at an age when others scarcely retain a spark of affection or a sense of pain,—these belong to no common sovereign or man. As a sovereign, Francis Joseph

had been neither admirable nor fortunate. His reign was full of hesitations and empty labours and humiliating renunciations. But it is rare in history for a king to have defended a more damnable political and social system by more brilliant and solid personal efforts in more hopelessly difficult circumstances. We must admit that. And the outward forms of his sovereignty have remained the same as they were centuries ago. If there has been any movement, it has been retrograde. And the forms still retain a certain amount of solemnity.

Without any of the impulses of youth or success or novelty, the Emperor continued to play his Imperial part. He was an ancient clock that persisted in telling the time with an old cuckoo-voice, and it is impossible to say how he managed it, for no one had wound him up for a long time. The cares of State, the practices of religion, official ceremonies, social affairs still found him faithful at his post.

Francis Joseph was a decorative sovereign. At any moment of his day, sheathed in any one of his uniforms, placed in any one of his many frames—at the Hofburg, at the Court Chapel of St. Stephen, at the Hoftafel of his banquets, at the Burg The-

atre, at the Exerzierplatz for his reviews, at Ischl and Gmunden for his holidays and hunts, he would pose so well that he might have been mistaken for a picture. Schönbrunn, however, was the frame which had been made on purpose for him.

That majestic castle with its lofty front and the straight lines over the windows, like serene and severe eye-brows, the solemn halls within, and between them some intimate and shady corners, the magnificent conservatories, the avenues with plenty of room to breathe, the light and chatter of the fountains, and its very own horizon, closed in everywhere with trees and statues and huge vases—here the Emperor, who was born at Schönbrunn, lived in his appropriate atmosphere. For from the halls and the avenues, from the dusty odours of the tapestry and the pungent perfume of the myrtles, there issued something very soothing to a heart that still sighed for olden times. Everything proclaimed living memories of Maria Theresa, a frown of vengeance against Napoleon I. and his spirit, a clever mystification of all our epoch, a whole programme in fine. I think that, when he entered here, Francis Joseph shook off all the dust from his shoes and stockings, shook it off because it was all

too modern. Less tall and yet as big as the residence of the Sun-King, it bears a superficial likeness to its brother (all the castles of sovereigns are at least half-brothers), but it possesses a particular and very special note of its own.

That is to be found in the very great profusion of Chinese ornaments. There are whole rooms full of precious old porcelain. Both Vienna and Schönbrunn face the East, whence a hand was stretched, not for the first time, under the guidance of Kara Mustapha, to try to take the capital. Strange what a lavish flood of sunshine from fragrant distant lands in the gaudy halls which framed Napoleon and the humbled sovereigns; Francis Joseph went there to forget his cares during one moment of the day. Then the throne-room, where he received the vows and deferential congratulations of all the principal Germans and all the scholars of Vienna. A prelude to the situation of to-day. Who knows if the very old tiger would not have preferred a little less deference and a little more independence? But *habant sua fata libelli.* And Empires too.

The Hofburg on the other hand is colder and more silent. Perhaps because it has too many things to say. It is the real royal dwelling, where

the Sovereign could find a single corner in which to forget his cares, and everything stood to attention in order to proclaim that he was king. And those who do not belong to the house, let them take heed how they step across the halls, for they will see a menace in their own reflections on the polished floors, on every wall, in the mirrors and the marbles. The shadows are violent by day and curl themselves up in self-defence to suffocate any gleams of intrusive sunlight on the rare occasions when it visits Vienna. In the evenings there are people fast asleep in one hall, people quarrelling in another, always very quietly by the good old light of candles.

What! Candles? Surely we are in the twentieth century. Oh! yes, but Francis Joseph had a holy horror of electric light. Was it an instinctive repulsion or a resentment of everything connected with modern times? In any case he hated electric light. So even at high Court festivals, the Imperial orders were that fine wax candles or *wollrath,* a fat perfumed substance extracted from the brains of whales, should be used to light up the halls of the Hofburg. In my opinion, the Emperor was quite right. The reflections of the candles on the granites

and polished mirrors and the silver vases and ancestral bronzes and the Chinese porcelain produced fairy-tale effects. For the Hofburg is beautiful, and even pretty women do not appear at their best in an impudent blaze of light. The Emperor knew that: he never permitted the installation of electric light in his bed-room.

Do not be surprised if I introduce the Emperor's doings as a man of the world by referring to his religious practices. I do not propose to follow the august sinner into the confessional-box or diagnose his conscience while he was on his knees. I only want to recall those ecclesiastical ceremonies on which the Emperor's participation conferred an official character.

There is the very solemn procession of Corpus Domini, when the Sovereign follows the baldaquin of the Holy Sacrament bareheaded and barefoot. I do not suppose the Ruler of the Universe rejoices over it specially, but the Austrian clergy do, for it recognises an acknowledgment of their power.

The religious ceremony of the washing of feet is characteristic. There the twelve oldest citizens of Vienna saw the Emperor kneel before them; they stretched out their respective feet and the Emperor



Photograph, Paul Thompson.

FRANCIS JOSEPH (1914)



washed them one by one. The twenty-four feet had naturally been washed previously, for I forgot to mention that the twelve citizens must all be very poor and they had no facilities for washing at home.

After the washing, they received a purse of money, which the Sovereign placed round their necks. Then there was a dinner, suited to their aged stomachs, and they were waited on by the chief Court dignitaries.

On this and other similar occasions the Emperor wore his highest uniforms, very often that of a field-marshal, with a white tunic and a big collar embroidered with oak-leaves and stupendous trousers of vivid red with broad bands of glittering gold. With reference to the Imperial trousers, I remember a tragi-comic episode, which I have heard my mother relate when I was a boy. My eldest brother was the chief actor in the drama, Hadrian, who, as I have mentioned, is shut up in the "noble madhouse" of Dr. Pierson at Koswig. Hadrian was brought up at the famous Theresianum College which has the honour of supplying the Emperor with his pages, young nobles who are

indispensable to Court ceremonies, and he served as a page too for some time.

But, though he was a good musician and mathematician, he was always a bit strange and lived with his head in the clouds. That is how he fell into disgrace with the Sovereign and lost a post that was very honourable but in no way remunerative.

It happened in this way. There was a solemn function, I forget whether it was at the Court chapel or in the Cathedral of St. Stephen. Francis Joseph was present with the whole Court and the diplomatic body. At a certain moment, the Sovereign had to kiss the Gospels. On each side of him stood a page in white, red, gold and lace, holding an armoured candlestick with a wax-candle of prodigious proportions. That day, perhaps in 1875, Hadrian was one of the two pages. My mother was among the Court ladies, watching the scene, when she suddenly had a fearful shock. The priests glittered with gold and precious stones, the incense rose to the Gothic roof, the austere courtiers stiffened themselves in all the starch of etiquette, the Emperor bent to kiss the Gospels, at his side Hadrian held the huge candle aloft. The organ and the choir—those were the true culprits. It

was really delightful music. Hadrian, having an extraordinarily sensitive soul for music, let his mind wander thousands of miles away, wrapt in dreams. The trembling of his hand communicated itself to the big fat candle. Anyhow, that too began to weep with all its hot liquid soul, covering the Emperor's magnificent trousers with its tears.

My mother observed this with terror; the diplomatists remarked it still more, for they were nearer; the Emperor noticed it most of all and looked at my mother who was now paler than the candle, but he said nothing. The only person who remained sublimely unconscious was my brother Hadrian, the unfortunate author of the crime. It was the last time that he served the Emperor.

The most solemn religious ceremonies usually took place in the Gothic cathedral of St. Stephen with its heavy majestic aisles and the old reredos and pulpit which are two poems of lace wrought in stone and browned by time. The high altar was covered with artistic work of the purest silver, the columns were draped with rich tapestry, a marvellous choir produced classical and ecclesiastical music. Even Beelzebub would have been intoxicated by the harmonies of form and sound and colour.

The Emperor maintained an exemplary demeanour during the longest ceremonies. Sometimes impatience, tyrannical nymph, began to possess him. Then the nearest diplomats would notice that he shifted his position from time to time, his body resting first on his right foot, then on the left. This habit was well known to his intimates. Then the priests recited their prayers more rapidly, the *maestoso* and the *lento* of the admirable choir became almost imperceptibly *movimentato* and *allegretto,* the voice of the celebrant assumed a certain urgency and the genuflexions increased their pace. The diplomatists, old foxes, understood and looked intently at His Majesty's faithful chamberlain, who was waiting behind a pillar for his august master.

The very high position accorded to the clergy in Francis Joseph's reign was emphasised at these solemn functions. It was also emphasised, though perhaps more discreetly, in the life of Court, aristocracy and people.

Thus an Austrian Cardinal cannot be legally compelled to give evidence in a law-suit against his will. This very important privilege is conceded only

to sovereign princes and to their immediate progeny.

Then the Nuncio, even though he be not a Cardinal, is always treated at Court as though he were a Sovereign. The two flaps of the monumental door of the throne-room are thrown open for him, while only one is opened for a noble, however high his rank. The whole ceremonial for the reception of a Nuncio is the same as that for Sovereigns, and differs from that accorded to Ambassadors of the first and second rank, that is to say the *Botschafter* and the *Gesandten.* In a procession the Nuncio walks quite alone after the Imperial and royal archdukes, then the diplomatic body all together.

I insist on this point, for it is essential to a proper understanding of the Austrian Court. There is probably not in the whole of Austria a single Catholic noble family (and the immense majority is Catholic) that does not count a priest or monk among the high ranks of the clergy. And it is he who always directs the destinies of the race with the utmost astuteness and discretion.

The power of the Jesuit Father H—— A——, to whom I have already alluded, is unimaginable. And it was probably greater still during the life-

time of Francis Ferdinand, his pupil and mental creature.

I must already have mentioned that, at Rudolph's wedding-breakfast, Francis Joseph ate in a hurry as though he were pursued by Tartars. That figure of speech is not mine, but that of old Count Lamezan, who said it with reference to the Emperor's usual meals. He never departed from the habit. He dined at a table by himself, indulging in rapid, badly masticated mouthfuls, just the opposite of Gladstone who used to bite and ruminate for a long time. His dinners were very frugal: a little broth, a small piece of boiled beef with very few vegetables, often a flour-pudding, and two fingers of wine with much mineral water. Take note of this bill of fare: it may be the secret of living to be eighty-six. And the Emperor's light meal was just the same at the Hoftafel, or Court banquet. But the Court of Vienna was shrewd enough to take precautions with the cooks for the provision of an opulent repast. It passes by whatever it does not specially fancy, for it knows that there are better dishes to follow. The wines are excellent, but, according to etiquette, served sparingly, so much so that the devotees of

Bacchus, especially Orientals, are wont to appropriate the bumpers of abstemious neighbours. And afterwards there is a scramble for the rich boxes of sweet-meats from Sacher, Gerstner, Denimel and other celebrated confectioners. These are all carried away, and the ladies are the most shameless in pursuit of them.

The Empress Elisabeth used to eat scarcely anything at Court banquets. Pale, cold, motionless, a regular Niobe petrified with grief, she used to attend these culinary feasts with a look of disgust on her face.

The Sovereigns and the imperial family always took tea in a separate room, where only ambassadors had the right to be present. The Court concerts, on the other hand, brought all together again. And I may mention here that the Emperor's hatred of Italy did not extend to music, for he allowed the best Italian artists, such as the harpist Zamara and the pianist Stanzieri, to perform. I can tell you they were worth listening to.

Then there was the Strauss orchestra, most perfect. So perfect was it in harmony and rhythm that one day, or rather one evening, the beautiful Duchess Tyra of Cumberland was carried away

by the melody and forgot etiquette so far as to beat time with her feet. At that moment the Emperor, who was staring at her little foot, perhaps in order to appreciate the music better, was carried away by a strange suggestion and began to beat time too. Others followed suit and thus it became the fashion at Court concerts for a certain period to beat time with the feet.

Francis Joseph was a very rigid observer of the complicated laws of etiquette, especially of military etiquette. And to ensure their observance he displayed all the natural instincts of an absolute and tyrannical sovereign; indeed, he would display them still more severely but for the influence of modern times and the legacies with which the French Revolution has oppressed poor sovereigns.

Sometimes his indignation at seeing the most important regulations neglected set fire to the violence of his Imperial character. He then gave way to epileptic fury. And the cream of the joke is that he was then himself the one to depart thousands of miles from that composure which etiquette imposed.

I will mention a few small matters of everyday life. For instance, officers' boots must not be var-

nished or have any sewing or pattern on the toes. The penalty is *zimmerarrest,* confinement to your room. It has happened to many men to enter the royal palace with beautifully shining boots and to go out again very quickly to shut themselves up at home for who knows how many days.

Then the law is that gloves are to be of plain wash leather. One day the young Prince Thurn and Taxis came to Court in glacé gloves and could escape only with the utmost difficulty from the fury of his epileptic Majesty. I assure you that it would have been a much smaller offence to have committed a crime. For crimes merely transgress the laws made by men, whereas wearing varnished boots and glacé gloves is rebellion against the supreme Imperial will. I should like to have seen Francis Joseph reigning in times when there were no horrible parliaments and fewer middle-class restrictions on royal authority. Then he could have hanged people for mistaking their boots or their gloves.

My father was once pounced upon. He, a French noble, came to Austria when he married the Austrian Countess Strachwitz and obtained the rank of chamberlain at the Court of Vienna. It

was a distinguished post but not a bed of roses, for the Emperor, though still young, was already irritable, restless, difficult to content. For instance, he hated a certain way of doing the hair, which consisted in parting it at the back of the head, and he had formally forbidden it to his chamberlains. My father, however, liked to do his hair that way, and I do not pretend to say which of the two was in the right. And, like a modern, microscopic version of the old rebel Rakoczy, he flouted the Imperial order and did his hair in his own way whenever he did not have to go to Court.

So one summer afternoon, amid a gay clatter of carriages and crowds of people surging through the sun and dust and the blue shadows of the lime-trees, he walked along the Prater with my mother on his arm, rejoicing in the symmetry of the careful parting at the back of his head. He was perfectly calm and happy, never dreaming of a possible storm with such bright sunshine. But when he reached the Platerstern, the storm broke. He had not noticed that the Imperial carriage was catching him up, an open carriage as usual, drawn by two big horses with a *Leibjäger* in bottle-green seated beside the coachman. Within the carriage,

was the sacred and irate person of the Emperor with an adjutant by his side.

Suddenly the carriage stopped. The adjutant jumped out and hurried after my father, bearing a terrible message: "As the Count is wearing his hair in a way expressly forbidden by His Majesty, the Count will return home at once and remain there for twenty-one days. I have the honour to salute the Count."

This said, the instrument of the Imperial wrath re-entered the sovereign's carriage and it went on its way.

So my parents had to give up their enjoyment of the sun and the trees and the fashionable promenade. But when on the following day my mother received an invitation or command to be present at an intimate reception at the Hofburg, the answer was that the Countess would remain at home to keep her husband company.

These, after all, were trifling expressions of Francis Joseph's dictatorial character. He was even stricter than the strictest Austrian etiquette, and he once obliged one of his ministers to resign merely because, in the heat of a discussion at the

Council, he had permitted himself to thump the big table in the presence of the Emperor.

But the Emperor's stubborn will did not stop at that. It would have been too little. He, the potent sovereign, had found in his will a still more domineering tyrant. His will had ruled all the acts of his life and involved him in most of his tragedies.

I have already mentioned the duel which he insisted upon and which, besides costing the life of a young Prince, exposed the Imperial head to a mother's malediction that he often had cause to remember during his long life.

The people too owe many of their misfortunes to the sovereign's will. For at a period of puppet-kings in the hands of ministries, it was his will which made Francis Joseph a real Emperor, conceived on ancient lines, capable of proclaiming his ideas and imposing them with a word. And the consequences were often tragic.

I remember in this connection a scene at a very important council of war in 1866, at which one of my uncles, a high officer, was present. It was not an easy moment for Austria. War was going on both with Prussia and Italy. The Council had to decide on the plan of campaign. Besides the Em-

peror and many Archdukes and generals, there were his uncle, the warlike Archduke Albrecht, he of Custozza and Novara, and brave General Benedek, who was then commander-in-chief against his will, for the Emperor had insisted on his assuming the heavy responsibility of conducting the operations against the Prussian army in Bohemia.

Benedek, pale and hesitating, kept repeating,

"Your Majesty, I can be of some use for the operations in Lombardy, but I should be a fish out of water for those in Bohemia. I beg and entreat you most urgently, do not employ me where I could not and should not know how to be useful." The Emperor replied with violence, "You are a soldier. All you have to do is to obey."

And after a moment of silent anguish, still hard and menacing, he bent over the big map on the table. "You will attack there and there," he said, traversing mountains and rivers with a nervous finger, "and we shall win, shall we not?"

To which Benedek replied slowly and heavily, "In that case we are lost, Your Majesty. However, I bow to your will."

Then the Emperor, forgetting the presence of his uncle Albrecht, of whom he stood in great awe,



struck the green table with his fist and cried with great violence and concentrated fury, "Why lost, I ask you, why?"

Dumb and obedient, according to rule, the Council approved the Imperial will. And it was quickly followed by Sadowa and a court-martial on Benedek and the beginning of Austria's enslaving by Germany. And now comes the joint campaign in the Carpathians, which, even won, will always prove the worst of defeats for Austria. "Oh! save, oh! save me from my friends!" Thus was this Emperor. Out of his will, harder than a block of granite, he fashioned a sort of uniform to wear on grand occasions. He broke the will of those who dwelt about him, of every amorous and rebellious Archduke: more than one of them owes his moral ruin to the firm opposition of Francis Joseph. He imposed the most serene coldness on himself and his griefs, so much so that, on the death of Elisabeth, whom he had surely tortured enough, he could actually say, "The world has no idea how I loved that woman!" He held his head erect on the day of the funeral of his only son; and he accompanied his young nephews to their last resting-place as though he were

taking a stroll. And then, at eighty-four years of age, still with an iron fist, he coldly, wisely, deliberately set Europe in a blaze. Even now he did not give way. It was time, according to him, to abandon the earthly game. Perhaps he was preparing to wrestle with the supreme will of the Eternal Father in the world beyond the skies.

He was above all a military Emperor. But you know the campaigns in which he took an active part as a young man; you know his exclusive devotion to everything that had to do with the army; you have seen him in photographs, on horseback and on foot, reviewing his soldiers; so there is no need for me to speak of these things.

I will only say that I have observed and even admired his persistently fine presence and the physical endurance which had rebelled against nature's laws on more than one occasion even in 1907 and 1908 when he was nearer eighty than seventy. I remember him at the great annual review on the Schmelz, a kind of parade-ground at Vienna. From the back of his old horse, another miracle of preservation, he cut on the whole a finer figure than the many generals around him, though they were younger by twenty years: under the July sun



they seemed broken down. The horse, I assure you, was worthy of his master; a friendly Heaven must have created them so that they might be born and die together. I had the honour of stroking the noble animal one day at the famous Imperial stables of Lippizra on the Carso near Trieste.

The sovereign was untirable at a review. He interested himself in every single soldier, almost in every single button on every single soldier. To go from one body of troops to another, the old Emperor and the old horse tore like a whirlwind; many of the more or less exotic attachés of his immense suite lost all faith in their equestrian experience at such critical moments. Then, when he proceeded to the inspection, Francis Joseph became slow, very slow, a redskin scouting behind a thicket. He went through the inspection with great care.

I cannot say that he had ever been cruel to his soldiers. He rather displayed a certain benevolence, and at that time you may have wagered that he was not playing a part in a comedy. But he demanded and exacted all their strength and all their powers of resistance without mercy. If he was not saluted, he said nothing. If a Tyrolese,



Photograph, Paul Thompson.

FRANCIS JOSEPH FROM A PAINTING BY JULIUS RITTER VON BLAAS



with the frankness of his mountains, called him "thou," he smiled with satisfaction. But if the man did not know how to shoot, then there was trouble. For everybody in Tyrol is supposed to be born with a gun in his hand. And the Emperor had taken more trouble over the formation of shooting-clubs in Austria than he had over libraries: all those clubs were in direct relations with the Sovereign, who paid for them out of his own pocket. They were more important for the nation than a whole council of ministers.

"I can have as many ministers as I want; but a steady hand, sharp eyes and first-class guns are far more rare." Those were his words and they seem to me to contain a whole programme; they reveal the utter difference between the Latin and the Austro-German points of view.

On the other hand, he was cruel with his generals. High officers in the army had plenty of opportunities of making acquaintance with his brutality, at least of speech, when anything had not gone quite rightly according to his point of view at a critical moment. Here is an example. Very many years ago, one of my relations, I think a cousin of my mother, Baron Strachwitz, of the Austro-



Silesian branch, was a general in the army. He was a violent man, of very limited intelligence, but full of pride and fat enough to suggest apoplexy. There were manoeuvres on a hilly plain, and a fierce July sun was rendered all the more trying by the imminent approach of a thunderstorm. Generals, soldiers and horses streamed with perspiration. Francis Joseph, affected that day by a persistent attack of ill-humour, bustled about from one to another, more tiresome than a gadfly.

There was to be a cavalry attack led by General Baron Strachwitz over a terraced hill. Poor general! He had a very tight uniform that strangled him by the neck and made his face like a turkey-cock. What with the sun and the Emperor's presence, he was overwhelmed with heat and confusion.

The assault was ordered. The Emperor was not satisfied. "Halt!" was roared with a menace like that of the sky which grew black over the distant mountain. The assault was resumed. Worse than ever! Then the Emperor could no longer restrain himself. He emitted a savage cry, heedless of the many generals and attachés who stood round him terrified:

"But what sort of ass is commanding this accursed attack?"

Strachwitz had heard the invective. In accordance with regulations, he put his horse to a gallop and rode up to the Emperor with lowered sword. He was red, almost black in the face, and had great difficulty in gasping out the regulation reply: "I, your Majesty, Baron Strachwitz, General of the . . . regiment of cavalry, etc."

Then he had a stroke and fell dead.

Francis Joseph grew pale for a moment and showed some slight emotion; he suspended the manoeuvres for ten minutes with his watch in his hand. Then the attack was resumed.

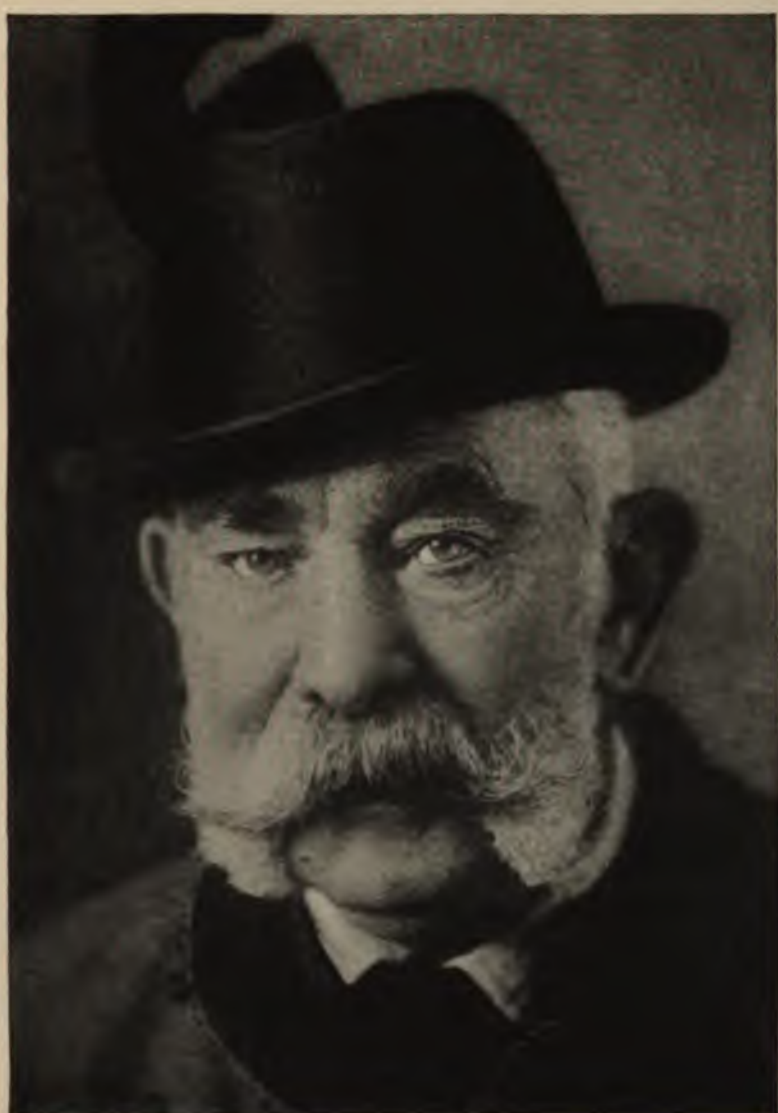
You had never been out hunting with him. That is a pity. It was interesting, for the sovereign was not only a mighty hunter of women. One would indeed imagine that he preferred wild game judging by the keenness he displayed. His physical fitness as he tramped over tiring hills and dales, and his keen glance through the densest thickets make him appear a sympathetic sportsman. But, on closer observation, a certain mechanical way of going to business, a barbarous desire to kill for the sake of killing, which you read in his eyes, the



appalling number of poor furred and feathered creatures which you saw piled at his feet after a few hours' shooting, soon drove all sentiment out of your mind. Or at least you say that even animals might have been killed with a little more gentleness.

Francis Joseph's other passion was the theatre. The Burg Theatre and the Opera house were his two favourites, and there were sentimental as well as artistic reasons. Remember that it was the Burg Theatre which gave him Catherine Schratt, the incomparable interpreter of the "Merry Wives of Windsor," the ray of sunshine which came into Francis Joseph's life after so many tragedies. Also the Opera with its exhibition of so many agile legs in harmonious rhythm, and the nightly consolation of a dancer's easy love after so many heavy cares of State.

The supply of ballet-dancers at the Opera was for a long time entrusted to the wise and discreet hands of the self-styled Baroness Pasqualati, a dear good lady whom I have had the pleasure of knowing personally. Latterly the Baroness' hands became rather heavy in her choice of the dancers; indeed, the corps de ballet must have seemed to the



Photograph, Paul Thompson.

FRANCIS JOSEPH IN TYROLEAN COSTUME

Emperor to lack freshness, for one evening when it came in at the beginning of the second Act at a performance of Aïda, he said contemptuously, "This might really be the Museum of Bulak!"

In that museum, you may not know, the only exhibits are mummies. So the Baroness lost her job.

Apart from the ballet, however, Francis Joseph did not seem to care very much for the Imperial Opera. A magnificent and luxurious building, but too heavy and not imposing in front: so much so that one of the architects, seeing his artistic creation almost buried by the buildings of the Ringstrasse—much as the Roman law-courts seem to seek the bottom of the Tiber—committed suicide out of grief. I forget if the unfortunate architect was Van der Nüll or his colleague Schartsbrunn.

Francis Joseph certainly preferred the Burg Theatre to the Opera, prose to music, the peaceful love of Schratt to the devilry of the dancers. Those are the tastes of old age.

Mrs. Schratt must be respected.

First of all because, they say, the Emperor married her morganatically. Secondly because it is through her that the Imperial theatres of Vienna

are the best in the world. By her thoughtful advice the Emperor's purse endowed the Opera and the dramatic art with fantastic sums. All that art, money, care and labour can give is to be found in the chief theatres of Vienna. The artists are assured spacious lives and fine old-age pensions. And the good fairy who created or at least favoured this state of things was undoubtedly Mrs. Schratt.

You can see her depicted by the expert hand of the painter Kantsky on the handsome drop-scene of the Burg Theatre, a lovely blonde leaning on a lion, while on the other side, armed with a dagger and a poisoned cup, is the great tragedy-queen, Charlotte Wolter. They afford a happy contrast: calm and tempest, radiant day and gloomy night.

Then in the room adjoining the Emperor's box at the Burg, there is an admirable bronze statue hiding itself in a bower of electric lights. Some say that this statue is a portrait of Catherine and that is not unlikely. In any case, one thing is certain, that every time the Emperor passed the statue, he paused to gaze at it tenderly. He seemed even to forget his old dislike of the electric light.

Francis Joseph was very severe in questions of

morals . . . other people's morals, naturally. There must be no transgression. However much you racked your brains, you could never really appreciate what trouble he took to try to regulate the conduct of his mad nephews, the Archdukes.

Less trouble, however, in the case of his son, which is odd; but ever so much in the case of Archduke Otho. It is said at Vienna that the Emperor spent fortunes to relieve the Austrian Don Juan from his official mistress, Miss Schleinzer, a dancer at the Opera and joint mistress of the Prince of Braganza, perhaps too of other foreign princes at Vienna. To the "they says" I can add "I know," for I have the proofs in my hands—that is to say the letters in which, when I was a youth of few scruples and the possessor of a noble name, the Court offered me a hundred-and-fifty thousand crowns if I consented to marry Miss Schleinzer, and another one hundred-and-fifty thousand crowns if I was prepared to legitimatise the two sons which she presented to Archduke Otho. The intermediary in this affair, the kind soul who paid me the compliment of thinking of my very humble person, was dear Baroness Pasqualati, about whom



I have already spoken, the provider of well turned legs for the Imperial ballet.

When Archdukes refused to give way, they were visited with the Imperial wrath and all its terrible consequences. You know of the struggle with Johann Orth. But there was another case that escaped my notice. I heard about it only a little while ago from Baron Joseph Ceski, nephew of the Grand Baillie of the Sovereign Order of Malta. Francis Ferdinand and Otho had another brother who followed the family traditions and resolved to marry an actress or some one similar. There was the usual Imperial displeasure. The Archduke was compelled to give up his name and title, though he gave up only half his name, dropping the "Haps" and calling himself merely "Burg." That was little, but he had his worthy actress to wife in compensation. As he was a good fellow, he wanted to attend the funeral of his brother Francis Ferdinand, who was killed at Serajevo in 1914. It was impossible to prevent him, but no one shook hands with him, no lips uttered a word of welcome, no one showed the least sign of recognising him. There was an Imperial taboo. Baron Ceski, who was present, told me it was a shameful business.

All this did not prevent the Emperor from making use in conversation of expressions that were not exactly immoral, mind you, but that would certainly not be permitted by his severe confessor.

Once upon a time, for instance, when he was at Innsbruck, the capital of Tyrol, he was informed that the Municipal Council was in great difficulties about the choice of a temple for the priestesses of terrestrial love, whereupon he remarked to his courtiers and the local dignitaries, "You don't need a house. Put a roof over the whole town and the problem is solved."

Another time, at a *Ball bei Hof,* or private dance at Court, there was a good deal of talk about the German fleet, whose increase the Emperor viewed with ill-concealed dislike. *Die deutsche Flotte!* Note that in German the noun *Flotte* means fleet, whereas the adjective *flotte* may also mean merry.

Now at that moment my mother approached to present, at the Emperor's request, one of our German cousins from Prussian Silesia, an extraordinarily graceful girl, a Countess of Hoverden. The sovereign looked at the child with a great deal of interest, and my mother, who was often too ready to forget the laws of etiquette, ventured to ask,

"Which does your Majesty like best: *die deutsche Flotte* or *die flotte Deutsche?*" That is to say, the German fleet or the merry German. "Naturally, Countess Erminia, this merry German," the Emperor replied with a laugh.

You would scarcely have imagined that this tragic personage could enjoy a joke. But you will have noticed that he had always been quite different in his private and in his official life. Severe with the Archdukes, certainly; but as for himself, why that was quite another matter. *Quod licet Jovi non licet bovi*—what is sauce for the goose is not necessarily sauce for the gander. Just as he was the only man in the whole of Austria who could wear the war-medal on his breast with the inscription outwards and the head concealed. But that is perhaps because the head was his own.

So he too had his loves. But now they are things of the past. They were already in the category of memories at the time of the Francis Joseph I have been describing; they were memories at least ten years ago. He was then already confining himself to one quiet, homely, refreshing affection, that of his Catherine.

When I saw him last, the Emperor still held



Photograph, Paul Thompson.

THREE GENERATIONS OF HAPSBURGS

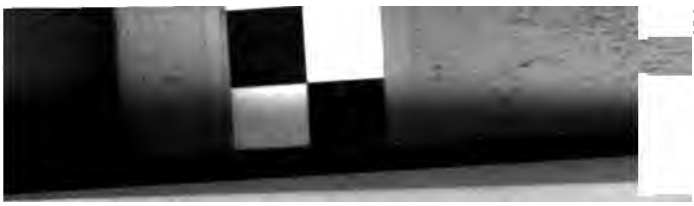
himself upright in spite of his years. His head was slightly bowed, now a little on one side, now on the other, as though he wanted to drive away something that tickled him inside his collar. He was on his way back from Imperial manoeuvres, where he had been on horseback for several hours under a pitiless downpour of rain. The result was a troublesome attack of bronchitis, which his faithful doctor Kerzl had a great deal of trouble to drive out of his emaciated body. Then there was still Mrs. Schratt to nurse him, as well as his daughter Gisella and Maria Valérie and a noisy crowd of merry nephews and nieces. His life had to be ordered on the most prudent lines. All those devoted nurses had to watch most carefully lest the least little speck of dust should get in and spoil the old time-piece under its bright glass bell. The pendulum swung between the Hofburg and the Castle of Schönbrunn.

But many things were changed. Toward the last he had for nurses, surly generals, there was no more sunshine in the halls of the Hofburg; the gardens of Schönbrunn seemed to exclude the springtime. The head was more bent and the eyes had a far away look, but not, I think, a look of



madness. There were voices, voices, voices; a soldier in his death-struggles amid the fire and snow and a mother in her sad cottage, thousands of miles away, who felt that her boy's last hour had come.

The head bent lower and lower still until on November 21, 1916, the last spark of life departed from the body of Francis Joseph. . . .





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